

Genres > [History](#)

100 Best History Books of All Time

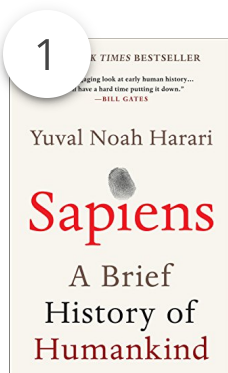
We've researched and ranked the best history books in the world, based on recommendations from world experts, sales data, and millions of reader ratings.

[Learn more](#)



Featuring recommendations from [Oprah](#)

[Winfrey](#), [Warren Buffett](#), [Malcolm Gladwell](#), and 416 other experts.



Sapiens

A Brief History of Humankind

Yuval Noah Harari



5.00

100,000 years ago, at least six human species inhabited the earth. Today there is just one. Us. Homo sapiens.

How did our species succeed in the battle for dominance? Why did our foraging ancestors come together to create cities and kingdoms? How did we come to believe in gods, nations and human rights; to trust money, books and laws; and to be enslaved by bureaucracy, timetables and consumerism? And what will our world be like in the millennia to come?

In *Sapiens*, Dr Yuval Noah Harari spans the whole of human history, from the very first humans to walk the... [more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), [Bill Gates](#),

[Richard Branson](#), and 37 others.



Barack Obama

eval(ez_write_tag([[250,250],'theceolibrary_com-leader-2','ezslot_7',164,'0','1'])); Fact or fiction, the president knows that reading keeps the mind sharp. He also delved into these non-fiction reads. ([Source](#))



Bill Gates

Both Melinda and I read this one, and it has sparked lots of great conversations at our dinner table. Harari takes on a daunting challenge: to tell the entire history of the human race in just 400 pages. He also writes about our species today and how artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and other technologies will change us in the future. Although I found things to disagree... ([Source](#))



Richard Branson

One example of a book that has helped me to #ReadToLead this year is *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari. While the book came out a few years ago now, I got around to it this year, and am very glad I did. I've always been fascinated in what makes humans human, and how people are constantly evolving, changing and growing. The genius of *Sapiens* is that it takes some daunting,... ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

2

Guns, Germs and Steel

The Fates of Human Societies

Jared Diamond Ph.D.



4.64

Explaining what William McNeill called *The Rise of the West* has become the central problem in the study of global history. In *Guns, Germs, and Steel* Jared Diamond presents the biologist's answer: geography, demography, and ecological happenstance. Diamond evenhandedly reviews human history on every continent since the Ice Age at a rate that emphasizes only the broadest movements of peoples and ideas. Yet his survey is binocular: one eye has the rather distant vision of the evolutionary biologist, while the other eye--and his heart--belongs to the people of New Guinea, where he... [more](#)



Recommended by [Bill Gates](#), [Charles T.](#)

[Munger](#), [Charlie Munger](#), and 15 others.



[Bill Gates](#)

Fascinating.... Lays a foundation for understanding human history. ([Source](#))



[Simon Sinek](#)

I'm a fan of books that challenge our assumptions, and Diamond offers us a new and remarkably simple way of looking at our world. Learning to challenge existing assumptions is core to effective leadership for it trains us to keep an open mind. ([Source](#))

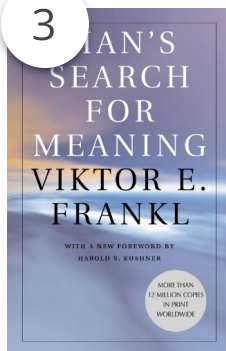


[Yuval Noah Harari](#)

A book of big questions, and big answers. The book turned me from a historian of medieval warfare into a student of humankind. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

3



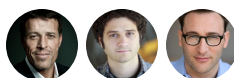
Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor E. Frankl, William J. Winslade, et al.



4.56

Man's Search for Meaning has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. Between 1942 and 1945 psychiatrist Viktor Frankl labored in four different camps, including Auschwitz, while his parents, brother, and pregnant wife perished. Based on his own experience and the stories of his many patients, Frankl argues that we cannot avoid suffering but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose. Frankl's theory—known as logotherapy, from the Greek word logos ("meaning")—holds... [more](#)



Recommended by [Tony Robbins](#), [Dustin](#)

[Moskovitz](#), [Simon Sinek](#), and 63 others.



[Tony Robbins](#)

Another book that I've read dozens of times. It taught me that if you change the meaning, you change everything. Meaning equals emotion, and emotion equals life. ([Source](#))



Dustin Moskovitz

[Dustin Moskovitz recommended this book on Twitter.] ([Source](#))



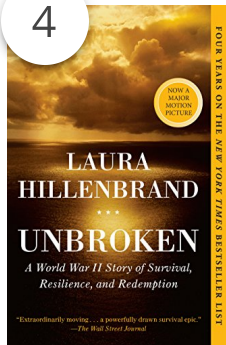
Simon Sinek

This is essential reading for anyone interested in the topic of purpose. Because Frankl's personal experience was so extreme, the lessons are that much more stark. And, most importantly, his lessons are universally applicable to all our lives. ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

4



Unbroken

A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption

Laura Hillenbrand



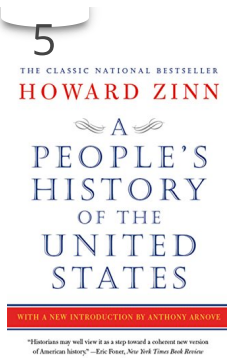
4.55

In her long-awaited new book, Laura Hillenbrand writes with the same rich and vivid narrative voice she displayed in *Seabiscuit*. Telling an unforgettable story of a man's journey into extremity, *Unbroken* is a testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit.

On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then,... [more](#)

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



A People's History of the United States

Howard Zinn



4.53

"A wonderful, splendid book--a book that should be ready by every American, student or otherwise, who wants to understand his country, its true history, and its hope for the future." --Howard Fast

With a new introduction by Anthony Arno, this edition of the classic national bestseller chronicles American history from the bottom up, throwing out the official narrative taught in schools—with its emphasis on great men in high places—to focus on the street, the home and the workplace.

Known for its lively, clear prose as well as its scholarly research,... [more](#)



Recommended by Lisa Ling, Alex Honnold, and 2 others.



Lisa Ling

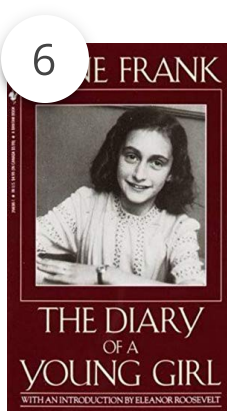
I credit this book with propelling me to dig deeper, and to not always believe the narrative. ([Source](#))



Alex Honnold

Totally changed the way I look at politics. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



The Diary of a Young Girl

Anne Frank, B.M. Mooyaart, Eleanor Roosevelt



4.51

In Everyman's Library for the first time—one of the most moving and eloquent accounts of the Holocaust, read by tens of millions of people around the world since its publication in 1947.

The Diary of a Young Girl is the record of two years in the life of a remarkable Jewish girl whose triumphant humanity in the face of unfathomable deprivation and fear has made the book one of the most enduring documents of our time.

The Everyman's hardcover edition reprints the Definitive Edition authorized by the Frank estate, plus a new introduction, a bibliography, and a... [more](#)



Recommended by Tim Fargo, Catalina Penciu, Alice Little, and 3 others.



Tim Fargo

@Quixoticnance Good point, Nancy. The museum is a powerful experience, esp. when you've read her book. ([Source](#))



Catalina Penciu

I'm a huge fan of personal stories and biographies like this one. ([Source](#))

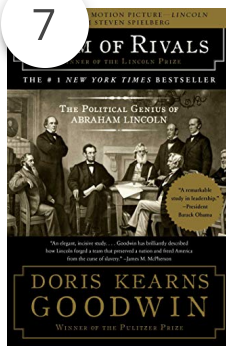


Alice Little

I remember being a fourth grader and trying to check out [this book] and being told it was grossly inappropriate and going so far as to have my parents take it to the school board and petition for me to be allowed to read this book. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

7



Team of Rivals

The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln

Doris Kearns Goodwin



4.46

Acclaimed historian Doris Kearns Goodwin illuminates Lincoln's political genius in this highly original work, as the one-term congressman and prairie lawyer rises from obscurity to prevail over three gifted rivals of national reputation to become president.

On May 18, 1860, William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, Edward Bates, and Abraham Lincoln waited in their hometowns for the results from the Republican National Convention in Chicago. When Lincoln emerged as the victor, his rivals were dismayed and angry.

Throughout the turbulent 1850s, each had energetically sought the...
[more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), [Bill Gates](#), [Kobe Bryant](#), and 11 others.



[Barack Obama](#)

The Oval office can be a lonely place, so reading about your forefather's experience could only help. "The biographies have been useful, because I do think that there's a tendency, understandable, to think that whatever's going on right now is uniquely disastrous or amazing or difficult," said President Obama in an interview. ([Source](#))



[Bill Gates](#)

I loved Goodwin's Team of Rivals and highly recommend this one too. ([Source](#))

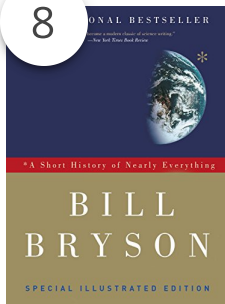


[Kobe Bryant](#)

I loved Team of Rivals, and Leadership really built on the things I had taken away from that book. Moving from basketball to building a company, I needed to learn new and different leadership skills, and Goodwin outlines the different skill-sets of Lincoln, both Roosevelts, and Lyndon Johnson, accessibly. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

8



A Short History of Nearly Everything

Bill Bryson



4.46

In Bryson's biggest book, he confronts his greatest challenge: to understand—and, if possible, answer—the oldest, biggest questions we have posed about the universe and ourselves. Taking as territory everything from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization, Bryson seeks to understand how we got from there being nothing at all to there being us. To that end, he has attached himself to a host of the world's most

advanced (and often obsessed) archaeologists, anthropologists, and mathematicians, travelling to their offices, laboratories, and field camps. He has read (or tried to read) their... [more](#)



Recommended by Amanda Palmer, Fabrice

Grinda, David Goldberg, and 3 others.



Amanda Palmer

[Amanda Palmer recommended this book in the book "Tools of Titans".] ([Source](#))



Fabrice Grinda

I have lots of books to recommend, but they are not related to my career path. The only one that is remotely related is Peter Thiel's Zero to One. That said here are books I would recommend. ([Source](#))

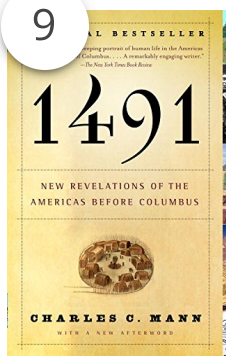


David Goldberg

What I really liked about A Short History of Nearly Everything is that it gives an excellent account of a lot of the personalities and the interconnectedness of important discoveries in cosmology and elsewhere. He does such a great job of bringing together our understanding of cosmology, evolution, paleontology, and geology in a very, very fluid way. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

9



1491

New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus

Charles C. Mann



4.42

In this groundbreaking work of science, history, and archaeology, Charles C. Mann radically alters our understanding of the Americas before the arrival of Columbus in 1492.

Contrary to what so many Americans learn in school, the pre-Columbian Indians were not sparsely settled in a pristine wilderness; rather, there were huge numbers of Indians who actively molded and influenced the land around them. The

astounding Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan had running water and immaculately clean streets, and was larger than any contemporary European city. Mexican cultures created corn in a...

[more](#)



Recommended by [Adam Conover](#), Scott Keyes, Colin Calloway, and 3 others.



[Adam Conover](#)

@TheBaltimoreSon @CharlesCMann Sure it! A total revolution in my understanding of history, all in one book. Amazing stuff. ([Source](#))



[Scott Keyes](#)

It's one of those books that takes everything you thought you knew about the history of European colonialists and indigenous groups in the Americas and turns it on its head. Just a fascinating deep-dive into early American history that questions a lot of dogma we were taught in school. ([Source](#))

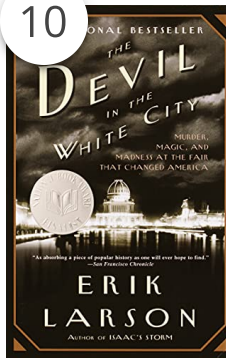


[Colin Calloway](#)

The book provides a huge hemispheric overview. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

10



The Devil in the White City

Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America

Erik Larson



4.42

Author Erik Larson imbues the incredible events surrounding the 1893 Chicago World's Fair with such drama that readers may find themselves checking the book's categorization to be sure that 'The Devil in the White City' is not, in fact, a highly imaginative novel. Larson tells the stories of two men: Daniel H. Burnham, the architect responsible for the fair's construction, and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer masquerading as a charming doctor.

Burnham's challenge was immense. In a short period of time, he was

forced to overcome the death of his partner and numerous other obstacles to... [more](#)



Recommended by Melissa Jacobs, and 1 others.



Melissa Jacobs

@Turk0219 Agree, that book was amazing! ([Source](#))

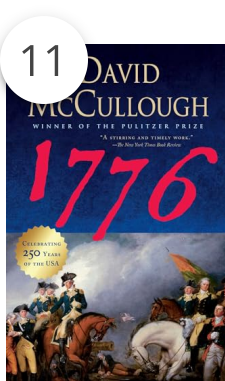
 [Buy on Amazon](#)

Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

[Sign Up for Free Book Summaries](#)



11 **1776**

David McCullough



4.41

In this stirring book, David McCullough tells the intensely human story of those who marched with General George Washington in the year of the Declaration of Independence, when the whole American cause was riding on their success, without which all hope for independence would have

been dashed and the noble ideals of the Declaration would have amounted to little more than words on paper.

Based on extensive research in both American and British archives, 1776 is the story of Americans in the ranks, men of every shape, size, and color, farmers, schoolteachers, shoemakers, no-accounts,... [more](#)



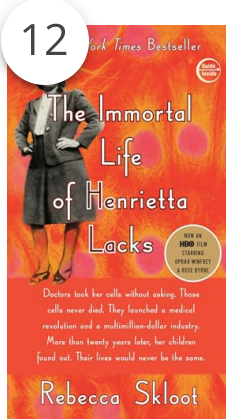
Recommended by Sean Junkins, and 1 others.



Sean Junkins

@msphillipsrvhs @rvhs Great book! Can never go wrong with anything from David McCullough! ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon



The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

Rebecca Skloot



4.40

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they’d weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets... [more](#)



Recommended by [Carl Zimmer](#), A.J. Jacobs, and 2 others.



[Carl Zimmer](#)

Yes. This is a fascinating book on so many different levels. It is really compelling as the story of the author trying to uncover the history of the woman from whom all these cells came. ([Source](#))



A.J. Jacobs

Great writer. (Source)

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

13



ELIE WIESEL
WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

"A slim volume of terrifying power."
—The New York Times

Night

Elie Wiesel, Marion Wiesel



4.40

Night is Elie Wiesel's masterpiece, a candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps. This new translation by Marion Wiesel, Elie's wife and frequent translator, presents this seminal memoir in the language and spirit truest to the author's original intent. And in a substantive new preface, Elie reflects on the enduring importance of *Night* and his lifelong, passionate dedication to ensuring that the world never forgets man's capacity for inhumanity to man.

Night offers much more than a litany of the... [more](#)



Recommended by Johanna Reiss, Steven Katz, and

2 others.



Johanna Reiss

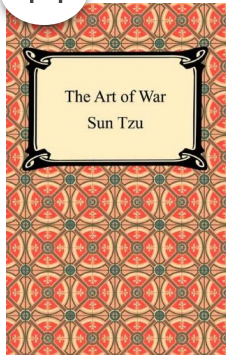
Elie Wiesel wrote..that he was considering running into the barbed wire once, but he didn't because his father needed him. (Source)



Steven Katz

Probably the best known memoir that has been written about the experience of the death camps. (Source)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



The Art of War

Sun Tzu



4.35

For more than two thousand years, *The Art of War* has stood as a cornerstone of Chinese culture—a lucid epigrammatic text that reveals as much about human psychology, politics, and economics as it does about battlefield strategy. The influence of Sun-tzu's text has grown tremendously in the West in recent years, with military leaders, politicians, and corporate executives alike finding valuable insight in these ancient words. In his crisp, accessible new translation, scholar John Minford brings this seminal work to life for modern readers.

Minford opens with a lively,... [more](#)



Recommended by [Reid Hoffman](#), Steve Blank,

[Neil deGrasse Tyson](#), and 17 others.



[Reid Hoffman](#)

Reid read Carl von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu as a boy, which informed his strategic thinking. ([Source](#))



[Neil deGrasse Tyson](#)

Which books should be read by every single intelligent person on planet? [...] The Art of War (Sun Tsu) [to learn that the act of killing fellow humans can be raised to an art]. If you read all of the above works you will glean profound insight into most of what has driven the history of the western world. ([Source](#))

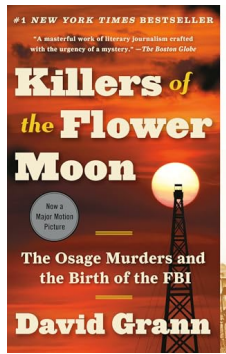


[Evan Spiegel](#)

After meeting Mark Zuckerberg, [Evan Spiegel] immediately bought every [Snapchat] employee a copy of 'The Art Of War'. ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



Killers of the Flower Moon

The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI

David Grann



4.34

In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, the Osage rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe.

Then, one by one, they began to be killed off. One Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, watched as her family was murdered. Her older sister was shot. Her mother was then slowly poisoned. And it was just the beginning, as more Osage began to die under mysterious circumstances.

In this last remnant of the Wild West—where... [more](#)



Recommended by Jacqueline Novogratz, and 1 others.

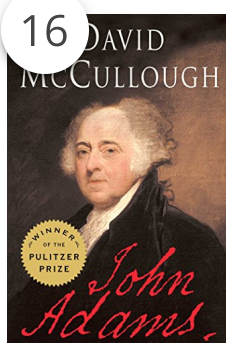


Jacqueline Novogratz

Reads like a novel while giving a deeper understanding of both the good and the terrible that humans are capable of. ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



John Adams

David McCullough



4.33

The enthralling, often surprising story of John Adams, one of the most important and fascinating Americans who ever lived.

In this powerful, epic biography, David McCullough unfolds the adventurous life-journey of John Adams, the brilliant, fiercely independent, often irascible, always honest Yankee patriot -- "the colossus of independence," as Thomas Jefferson called him -- who spared nothing in his zeal for the American Revolution; who rose to become the second President of the United States and saved the country from blundering into an unnecessary war; who was learned beyond all... [more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), Antonio

Villaraigosa, and 2 others.



[Barack Obama](#)

The biographies have been useful, because I do think that there's a tendency, understandable, to think that whatever's going on right now is uniquely disastrous or amazing or difficult. ([Source](#))

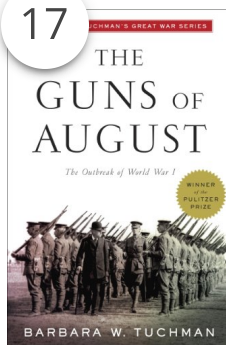


Antonio Villaraigosa

I love biographies and this one in particular strikes me. I don't believe John Adams comes immediately to mind as one of the great presidents, but he was. Students of history know he had a hand in so many of the founding documents we remember today. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

17



The Guns of August

Barbara Tuchman



4.33

"More dramatic than fiction...THE GUNS OF AUGUST is a magnificent narrative--beautifully organized, elegantly phrased, skillfully paced and sustained....The product of painstaking and sophisticated research."
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Barbara Tuchman has brought to life again the people and events that led up to World War I. With attention to fascinating detail, and an intense knowledge of her subject and its characters, Ms. Tuchman reveals, for the first time, just how the

war started, why, and why it could have been stopped but wasn't. A classic... [more](#)



Recommended by [Jim Collins](#), [Doris Kearns](#)

[Goodwin](#), [Ruth Harris](#), and 5 others.



[Doris Kearns Goodwin](#)

So beautifully written. But more importantly, for me, she was writing about battles and military stuff and things that you don't imagine that sometimes a woman might be so adept at. ([Source](#))



[Ruth Harris](#)

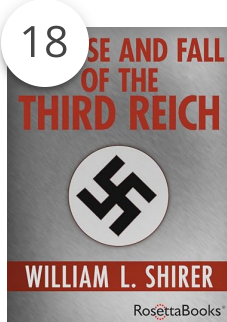
This is a very strange book for me to choose. For many people, it is the ultimate old-fashioned diplomatic history. But it enthuses me for several reasons. First of all, it's an extraordinary narrative. It reads magnificently and is a breathtaking horizon of events and people. Secondly, like me, she is obsessed with people. In the first chapter we have the funeral of Edward VII in 1910, which is... ([Source](#))



[Matt Calkins](#)

The best way to understand how the world resolves its conflicts and its tensions is by looking at how a conflict that has been studied thoroughly, like World War I, unfolded and resolved. Business is like this too. If anyone were to ever get to the heart of Coke vs. Pepsi, they would see a parade of mistakes in the same way World War I looks in retrospect—so many ways you could have done better. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

[A History of Nazi Germany](#)

William L. Shirer



4.31

Hitler boasted that The Third Reich would last a thousand years. It lasted only 12. But those 12 years contained some of the most catastrophic events Western civilization has ever known.

No other powerful empire ever bequeathed such mountains of evidence about its birth and destruction as the Third Reich.

When the bitter war was over, and before the Nazis could

destroy their files, the Allied demand for unconditional surrender produced an almost hour-by-hour record of the nightmare empire built by Adolph Hitler. This record included the testimony of Nazi leaders and of concentration camp...

[more](#)



Recommended by Gunhee Park, and 1 others.

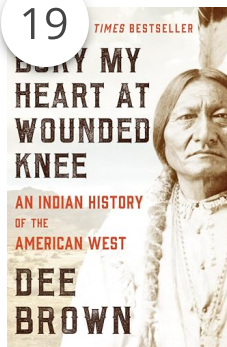


Gunhee Park

A few months back, I read a book called *A Higher Call: An Incredible True Story of Combat and Chivalry in the War-Torn Skies of World War II* that led me to want to learn more about Nazi Germany and Hitler, so I then picked up *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which led me to wanting to learn more about Winston Churchill. ([Source](#))

[Buy on Amazon](#)

19



Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

An Indian History of the American West

Dee Brown



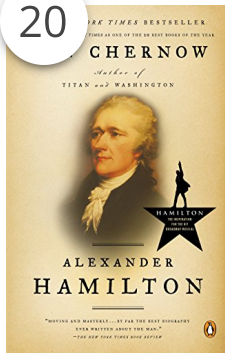
4.30

Now a special 30th-anniversary edition in both hardcover and paperback, the classic bestselling history *The New York Times* called "Original, remarkable, and finally heartbreaking...Impossible to put down."

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee is Dee Brown's eloquent, fully documented account of the systematic destruction of the American Indian during the second half of the nineteenth century. A national bestseller in hardcover for more than a year after its initial publication, it has sold almost four million copies and has been translated into seventeen languages. For this... [more](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

20



Alexander Hamilton

Ron Chernow



4.30

The inspiration for the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*!

In the first full-length biography of Alexander Hamilton in decades, National Book Award winner Ron Chernow tells the riveting story of a man who overcame all odds to shape, inspire, and scandalize the newborn America. According to historian Joseph Ellis, Alexander Hamilton is "a robust full-length portrait, in my view the best ever written, of the most brilliant, charismatic and dangerous founder of them all." Few figures in American history have been more hotly debated or more grossly misunderstood than... [more](#)



Recommended by [Travis Kalanick](#), [Ryan](#)

[Holiday](#), [Jim Manley](#), and 7 others.



[Travis Kalanick](#)

[Travis Kalanick changed his Twitter] avatar to Alexander Hamilton after having read [this book]. ([Source](#))



[Ryan Holiday](#)

Related and with equal weight, I want to recommend George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon by Stephen W. Sears (a biography of the talented but utterly delusional General George McClellan), Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion, and Redemption of Stonewall Jackson by S.C. Gwynne (a biography of the brilliant but manic Stonewall Jackson) and Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton (an equally brilliant, more... ([Source](#)))



[Jim Manley](#)

Am reading this book, it's called Hamilton by Ron Chernow. Not sure if anyone has heard of it - but Hamilton calling John Adams a crazy President has a certain resonance in this day and age. History is amazing ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

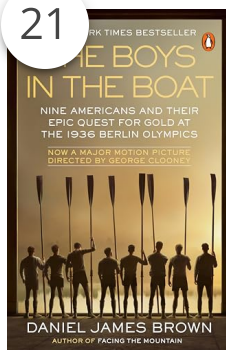
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

Sign Up for Free Book Summaries

21



The Boys in the Boat

Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Daniel James Brown



4.29

For readers of Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit* and *Unbroken*, the dramatic story of the American rowing team that stunned the world at Hitler's 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Daniel James Brown's robust book tells the story of the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar crew and their epic quest for an Olympic gold medal, a team that transformed the sport and grabbed the attention of millions of Americans. The sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the boys defeated elite rivals first from eastern and British universities and finally the German crew rowing for Adolf Hitler in...

[more](#)



Recommended by [Satya Nadella](#), [Ryan](#)

[Holiday](#), [Gail Kelly](#), and 6 others.



[Satya Nadella](#)

Nadella calls this tale with a local Seattle connection—it involves an underdog University of Washington crew team and the 1936 Berlin Olympics—"A wonderful illustration of the importance of teamwork, which was a core part of my focus out of the gate as CEO. ([Source](#))



[Ryan Holiday](#)

Another great narrative nonfiction out this year that I hope you'll like is: *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* by Daniel James Brown. ([Source](#))

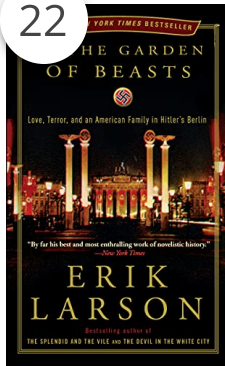


[Gail Kelly](#)

Member of the Group of 30, and former CEO of Westpac will be spending her summer months reading a memoir, a novel and historical non-fiction. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

22



In the Garden of Beasts

Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin

Erik Larson



4.28

Erik Larson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Devil in the White City*, delivers a remarkable story set during Hitler's rise to power.

The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Nazi Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history.

A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for... [more](#)



Recommended by [Steve Schmidt](#), [Daniel](#)

[Hamermesh](#), and 2 others.



[Steve Schmidt](#)



@egayle333 Ellyn, with respect Hitler was always clear about his intent. A great book to read from a US perspective is *In the Garden of Beasts*. Trump is much more analogous to Mussolini. ([Source](#))

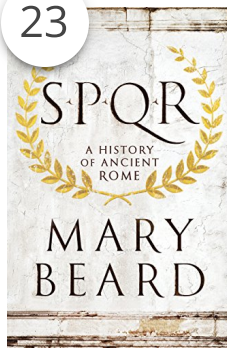


Daniel Hamermesh

At a time of increased danger of totalitarianism in the U.S., reading a history of an insider's view of its growth in Germany in the 1930s gives a good perspective on our contemporary problems, as well as being fascinating history and biography in its own right. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

23



SPQR

A History of Ancient Rome

Mary Beard



4.27

In *SPQR*, an instant classic, Mary Beard narrates the history of Rome "with passion and without technical jargon" and demonstrates how "a slightly shabby Iron Age village" rose to become the "undisputed hegemon of the Mediterranean" (*Wall Street Journal*). Hailed by critics as animating "the grand sweep and the intimate details that bring the distant past vividly to life" (*Economist*) in a way that makes "your hair stand on end" (*Christian Science Monitor*) and spanning nearly a thousand years of history, this "highly informative, highly readable" (*Dallas Morning...* [more](#))



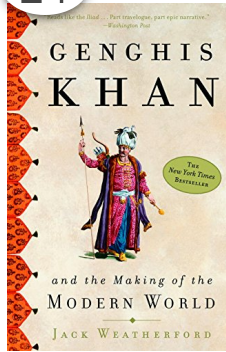
Recommended by [Olly Murphy \(Wycombe Abbey\)](#), and 1 others.



[Olly Murphy \(Wycombe Abbey\)](#)

I think *SPQR* is a wonderful book. Ancient Roman history is so very dense and intricate that it can be difficult to teach and learn about. Mary Beard makes it accessible—and she goes through it all, from the early days right up until the present day. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World

Jack Weatherford



4.24

The name Genghis Khan often conjures the image of a relentless, bloodthirsty barbarian on horseback leading a ruthless band of nomadic warriors in the looting of the civilized world. But the surprising truth is that Genghis Khan was a visionary leader whose conquests joined backward Europe with the flourishing cultures of Asia to trigger a global awakening, an unprecedented explosion of technologies, trade, and ideas. In **Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World**, Jack Weatherford, the only Western scholar ever to be allowed into the Mongols' "Great Taboo"—Genghis Khan's homeland... [more](#)



Recommended by [Ben Horowitz](#), Daymond John, Lisa Ling, and 5 others.



[Ben Horowitz](#)

Unexpectedly the most interesting book on the topic of how you think about inclusion. ([Source](#))



Daymond John

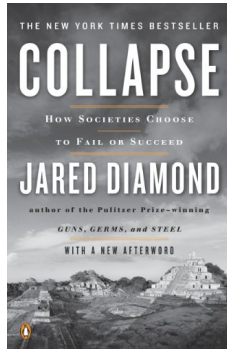
[Daymond John said this is one of his most-recommended books.] ([Source](#))



Lisa Ling

Genghis Khan was a great democratizer. His Mongol Empire conquered more territory in 25 years than the Romans did in 200. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Collapse

How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed

Jared Diamond



4.23

In Jared Diamond's follow-up to the Pulitzer-Prize winning *Guns, Germs and Steel*, the author explores how climate change, the population explosion and political discord create the conditions for the collapse of civilization

Environmental damage, climate change, globalization, rapid population growth, and unwise political choices were all factors in the demise of societies around the world, but some found solutions and persisted. As in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Diamond traces the fundamental pattern of catastrophe, and weaves an all-encompassing global thesis through a series of... [more](#)



Recommended by [Bill Gates](#), [Matthew](#)

[Yglesias](#), [Stefan Lessard](#), and 6 others.



[Bill Gates](#)

I found this to be an interesting follow-up to the excellent *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. It examines the downfall of some of history's greatest civilizations. ([Source](#))



[Matthew Yglesias](#)

I wanted to get a book on my list that is actually enjoyable to read, so not everything is quite so dry and dull as a narrative. I also wanted to include something that reflects the growing importance of environmental and ecological concerns to progressive politics in America. This is relatively new to the agenda – it's only been in the last 30 to 35 years. But going forward, one of the most... ([Source](#))

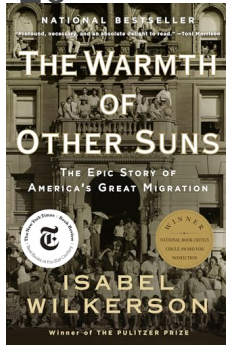


[Stefan Lessard](#)

He should read this book I'm almost finished with. Jared Diamond is one of my favorite historical authors. <https://t.co/f9JLYlsc4v>
<https://t.co/KtPgMZaWen> ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

26



The Warmth of Other Suns

The Epic Story of America's Great Migration

Isabel Wilkerson



4.21

In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life.

From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson compares this epic migration to the migrations of other peoples in history. She interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to new data and official records, to write this definitive and... [more](#)



Recommended by Britni Danielle, and 1 others.

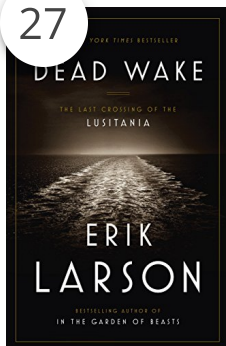


Britni Danielle

.@byshondaland announced its first @Netflix projects, including "The Warmth of Other Suns" a series based on Isabel Wilkerson's book about the Great Migration, and a documentary on @msdebbieallen's 'Hot Chocolate Nutcracker.'" Full slate: <https://t.co/rLCk65Mmyj> ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon

27



Dead Wake

The Last Crossing of the Lusitania

Erik Larson



4.21

From the #1 New York Times bestselling author and master of narrative nonfiction comes the enthralling story of the sinking of the Lusitania

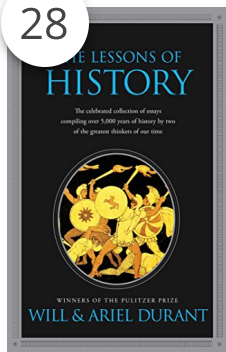
On May 1, 1915, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were anxious. Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone, and for months, its U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the Lusitania was one of the era's great transatlantic "Greyhounds" and her captain, William Thomas... [more](#)

 Recommended by Bethanye McKinney Blount, and 1 others.

 Bethanye McKinney Blount
There's so much in this one about leadership, failures and how winners write history. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

28



The Lessons of History

Will Durant, Ariel Durant



4.20

Will Durant once wrote that "most history is guessing, & the rest is prejudice." Now, 33 years later, the Durants, in this peroration to their monumental "Story of Civilization," look back to record the lessons & conclusions of their 10-volume excursion into human folly & achievement--&, coincidentally, to determine what value historical guesswork & historians' predispositions may have in understanding the nature of humanity. Their reflections are thematic in nature, discussing the influence & effect upon history of certain qualities, institutions & movements:... [more](#)



Recommended by [Ray Dalio](#), [Naval Ravikant](#), [Kevin Systrom](#), and 5 others.



[Ray Dalio](#)

The book I'd give [every graduating senior in college or high school] would be 'Lessons From History'. This is the Durants, they were maybe the greatest historians of all time. Anyway, of 5,000 years of history, probably wrote 5,000 pages on it, and they took this book - I

think it's 104 pages - and they took the themes of history, it could be from religion, natural resources, who knows, each one... [\(Source\)](#)



Naval Ravikant

Great book. I really like how it summarizes some of the larger themes of history. Very incisive and, unlike most history books, is actually kind of small and it covers a lot of ground. [\(Source\)](#)



Kevin Systrom

A great book. [\(Source\)](#)

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

29



Hidden Figures

The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race

Margot Lee Shetterly



4.20

Set against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South and the civil rights movement, the never-before-told true story of NASA's African-American female mathematicians who played a crucial role in America's space program—and whose contributions have been unheralded, until now.

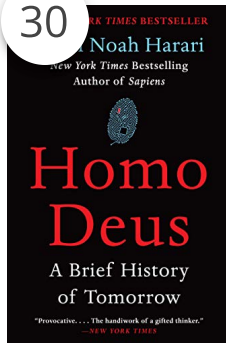
Before John Glenn orbited the Earth or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of professionals worked as “Human Computers,” calculating the flight paths that would enable these historic achievements. Among these were a coterie of bright, talented African-American women. Segregated from their white counterparts by...

[more](#)

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

30



Homo Deus

A Brief History of Tomorrow

Yuval Noah Harari



4.20

Yuval Noah Harari, author of the critically-acclaimed *New York Times* bestseller and international phenomenon *Sapiens*, returns with an equally original, compelling, and provocative book, turning his focus toward humanity's future, and our quest to upgrade humans into gods.

Over the past century humankind has managed to do the impossible and rein in famine, plague, and war. This may seem hard to accept, but, as Harari explains in his trademark style—thorough, yet riveting—famine, plague and war have been transformed from incomprehensible and... [more](#)



Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), [Bill Gates](#), [Naval Ravikant](#), and 18 others.



[Bill Gates](#)

Harari's new book is as challenging and readable as *Sapiens*. Rather than looking back, as *Sapiens* does, it looks to the future. I don't agree with everything the author has to say, but he has written a thoughtful look at what may be in store for humanity. ([Source](#))



[Richard Branson](#)

I certainly wouldn't consider myself a big reader of paleontology or anthropology – not good words for us dyslexics! – but I enjoy learning about how society has unfolded and history has developed in an exciting, easy to read way. The sequel, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, is a fascinating look into the future too. While these aren't traditional business or leadership books, they are all... ([Source](#))



[Vinod Khosla](#)

Not that I agree with all of it, but it is still mind-bending speculation about our future as a follow-up to a previous favorite, *Sapiens*. It's

directionally right. (Source)

 Buy on Amazon

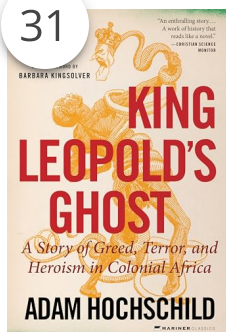
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

Sign Up for Free Book Summaries

31



King Leopold's Ghost

Adam Hochschild



4.19

In the 1880s, as the European powers were carving up Africa, King Leopold II of Belgium seized for himself the vast and mostly unexplored territory surrounding the Congo River. Carrying out a genocidal plundering of the Congo, he looted its rubber, brutalized its people, and ultimately slashed its population by ten million--all the while shrewdly cultivating his reputation as a great humanitarian. Heroic efforts to expose these crimes eventually led to the first great human rights movement of the twentieth century, in which everyone from Mark Twain to the Archbishop of Canterbury... [more](#)



Recommended by Steve Crawshaw, [Suzannah](#)

[Lipscomb](#), and 2 others.



Steve Crawshaw

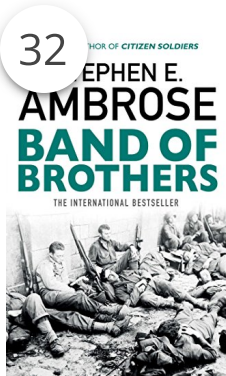
Large parts of the Belgian establishment loathe this book. It tells, as its sub-title says, 'a story of greed, terror and heroism'. It lays bare the absolute fiction that King Leopold's fief in the Congo was based on some philanthropic urge – a line that Leopold managed to peddle with extraordinary success at the time. I don't know if what Leopold did would be called 'genocide' today or not. But... [\(Source\)](#)



[Suzannah Lipscomb](#)

This is an incredibly powerful, horrifying, and utterly brilliant study of Belgian colonialism of the Congo and the brutality and genocide that followed in its wake. [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Band of Brothers

E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest

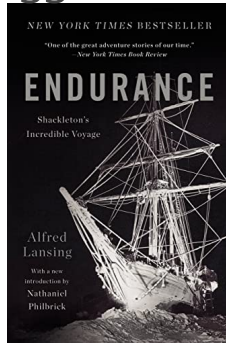
Stephen E. Ambrose



4.18

As good a rifle company as any, Easy Company, 506th Airborne Division, US Army, kept getting tough assignments--responsible for everything from parachuting into France early DDay morning to the capture of Hitler's Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden. In "Band of Brothers," Ambrose tells of the men in this brave unit who fought, went hungry, froze & died, a company that took 150% casualties & considered the Purple Heart a badge of office. Drawing on hours of interviews with survivors as well as the soldiers' journals & letters, Stephen Ambrose recounts the stories, often in the men's own... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Endurance

Shackleton's Incredible Voyage

Alfred Lansing



4.18

The harrowing tale of British explorer Ernest Shackleton's 1914 attempt to reach the South Pole, one of the greatest adventure stories of the modern age.

In August 1914, polar explorer Ernest Shackleton boarded the *Endurance* became locked in an island of ice. Thus began the legendary ordeal of Shackleton and his crew of twenty-seven men. When their ship was finally crushed between two ice floes, they attempted a near-impossible journey over 850 miles of the South Atlantic's heaviest seas to the closest outpost of civilization.

In *Endurance*, the... [more](#)



Recommended by [Ryan Holiday](#), Scott Belsky,

Mark Moses, and 5 others.



[Ryan Holiday](#)

50 plus years old, this is a story that more than stands the test of time. Sir Ernest Shackleton makes his daring attempt to cross Antarctic continent but his crew and boat are trapped in the ice flows. What follows are 600 days of harrowing survival, first from the elements, then from hunger, then from the sea as he makes a daring attempt in a small lifeboat to reach land 650 miles away, then...

[\(Source\)](#)



Scott Belsky

I think that there are some biographies, the Doris Kearns Goodwin type stuff, the Walter Isaacson classic biographies. I recently read Shackleton's *Endurance* story. [...] Which, obviously, relates to my thinking these days, which is just a phenomenal story. And there's so many interesting leadership lessons of counterintuitive things that he did that help you understand difficult decisions that... [\(Source\)](#)



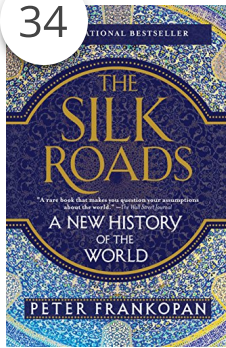
Mark Moses

Truly inspiring story of determination, grit and beating all odds.

[\(Source\)](#)

 Buy on Amazon

34



The Silk Roads

A New History of the World

Peter Frankopan



4.17

The sun is setting on the Western world. Slowly but surely, the direction in which the world spins has reversed: where for the last five centuries the globe turned westwards on its axis, it now turns to the east...For centuries, fame and fortune was to be found in the west - in the New World of the Americas. Today, it is the east which calls out to those in search of adventure and riches. The region stretching from eastern Europe and sweeping right across Central Asia deep into China and India, is taking centre stage in international politics, commerce and culture - and is shaping the modern... [more](#)



Recommended by Professor Frank McDonough, Raoul Pal, and 2 others.



Professor Frank McDonough

Christmas is coming and if you want to give a thought-provoking book to that history fan in your life then the recent books by the brilliant @peterfrankopan will satisfy. Some write books, this guy changes perceptions. <https://t.co/gWZWZnv5TN> ([Source](#))

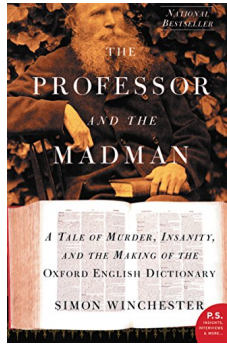


Raoul Pal

@The92ers @zerohedge It's fascinating. The Peter Frankopan book on the Silk Roads told history well from the perspective of Iran in particular ([Source](#))

 Buy on Amazon

35



The Professor and the Madman

A Tale of Murder, Insanity and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary

Simon Winchester



4.16

The Professor and the Madman, masterfully researched and eloquently written, is an extraordinary tale of madness, genius, and the incredible obsessions of two remarkable men that led to the making of the *Oxford English Dictionary* -- and literary history. The compilation of the *OED*, begun in 1857, was one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken. As definitions were collected, the overseeing committee, led by Professor James Murray, discovered that one man, Dr. W. C. Minor, had submitted more than ten thousand. When the committee insisted on honoring him, a... [more](#)



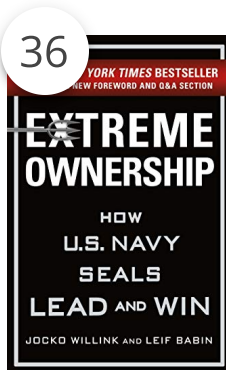
Recommended by Peter Gilliver, and 1 others.



Peter Gilliver

W.C. Minor was a member of the public, but he just happened to be a murderer who was banged up in Broadmoor. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Extreme Ownership

How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win

Jocko Willink, Leif Babin



4.16

An updated edition of the blockbuster bestselling leadership book that took America and the world by storm, two U.S. Navy SEAL officers who led the most highly decorated special operations unit of the Iraq War demonstrate how to apply powerful leadership principles from the battlefield to business and life.

Combat, the most intense and dynamic environment imaginable, teaches the toughest leadership lessons, with absolutely everything at stake. Jocko Willink and Leif Babin learned this reality first-hand on the most violent and dangerous battlefield in Iraq. As leaders of... [more](#)



Recommended by [Timothy Ferriss](#), [Casey](#)

[Neistat](#), [Roger Ailes](#), and 13 others.



[Timothy Ferriss](#)

Jocko is also the co-author of *Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win* — which I loved. ([Source](#))



[Casey Neistat](#)

My favorite Jocko book. ([Source](#))



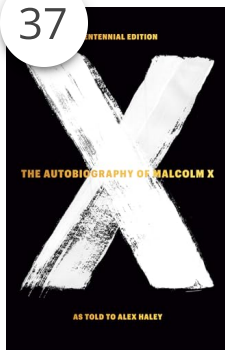
[Roger Ailes](#)

This is the SEAL Leadership book we have been waiting for. Poignant, powerful, practical. A must read for every leader. ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

37



The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Malcolm X, M. S. Handler, Ossie Davis, Attallah Shabazz, Alex Haley



4.16

With its first great victory in the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the civil rights movement gained the powerful momentum it needed to sweep forward into its crucial decade, the 1960s. As voices of protest and change rose above the din of history and false promises, one voice sounded more urgently, more passionately, than the rest. Malcolm X—once called the most dangerous man in America—challenged the world to listen and learn the truth as he experienced it. And his enduring message is as relevant today as when he first delivered it.

In the... [more](#)



Recommended by [Casey Neistat](#), [Ryan](#)

[Holiday](#), [Keith Ellison](#), and 5 others.



[Casey Neistat](#)

Aside from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Casey's favorite book is *The Second World War* by John Keegan. ([Source](#))



[Ryan Holiday](#)

I forget who said it but I heard someone say that *Catcher in the Rye* was to young white boys what the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* was to young black boys. Personally, I prefer that latter over the former. I would much rather read about and emulate a man who is born into adversity and pain, struggles with criminality, does prison time, teaches himself to read through the dictionary, finds religion...

([Source](#))

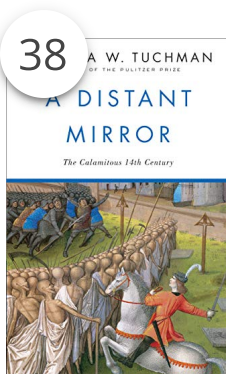


[Keith Ellison](#)

Malcolm X is somebody that everybody in America's prisons today could look at and say, 'You know what, I can emerge, I can evolve'

([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



A Distant Mirror The Calamitous 14th Century

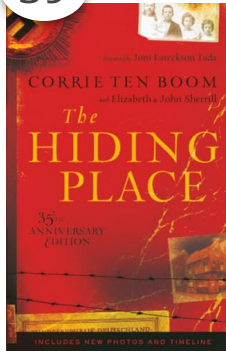
Barbara W. Tuchman



4.16

The 14th century gives us back two contradictory images: a glittering time of crusades and castles, cathedrals and chivalry, and a dark time of ferocity and spiritual agony, a world plunged into a chaos of war, fear and the Plague. **Barbara Tuchman** anatomizes the century, revealing both the great rhythms of history and the grain and texture of domestic life as it was lived. [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



The Hiding Place

The Triumphant True Story of Corrie Ten Boom

Corrie Ten Boom, John Sherrill, et al.



4.15

At one time Corrie ten Boom would have laughed at the idea that there would ever be a story to tell. For the first fifty years of her life nothing at all out of the ordinary had ever happened to her. She was an old-maid watchmaker living contentedly with her spinster sister and their elderly father in the tiny Dutch house over their shop. Their uneventful days, as regulated as their own watches, revolved around their abiding love for one another. However, with the Nazi invasion and occupation of Holland, a story did ensue.

Corrie ten Boom and her family became leaders in the Dutch... [more](#)



Recommended by Alison Alvarez, and 1 others.

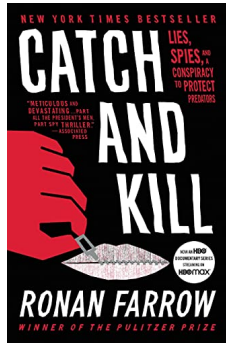


Alison Alvarez

What I really took with me from the book were the descriptions of how she dealt with the stress of solitary confinement and eventually the Ravensbruck concentration camp. I adapted some of her techniques for keeping her mind occupied to deal with my own problems with anxiety and worry. Also, it's a book with a surprising amount of joy in it for subject matter that is so dark. ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



Catch and Kill

Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators

Ronan Farrow



4.15

In a dramatic account of violence and espionage, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Ronan Farrow exposes serial abusers and a cabal of powerful interests hell-bent on covering up the truth, at any cost.

In 2017, a routine network television investigation led Ronan Farrow to a story only whispered about: one of Hollywood's most powerful producers was a predator, protected by fear, wealth, and a conspiracy of silence. As Farrow drew closer to the truth, shadowy operatives, from high-priced lawyers to elite war-hardened spies, mounted a secret...

[more](#)



Recommended by [Reese Witherspoon](#), Julie K. Brown, Bastian Obermayer, and 7 others.



[Reese Witherspoon](#)

Congrats @RonanFarrow on your incredible book #CatchandKill. Amazing investigative reporting and A real thrill ride of a read. 📖
([Source](#))



[Julie K. Brown](#)

The parallels to the Jeffrey Epstein case are amazing in @RonanFarrow's new book. Imagine this same predatory behavior and coverup among powerful men — not at a TV-media network — but at the highest levels of our government. #perversionofjustice
<https://t.co/wh2EJlg7iW> ([Source](#))



[Bastian Obermayer](#)

I know I'm very late to this party, but: „Catch And Kill“ from the unrelenting @RonanFarrow is a hell of a read!! Need inspiration for how to hold the powerful accountable - or only looking for great entertainment? Get this book. <https://t.co/y3xWkUTWhh> ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

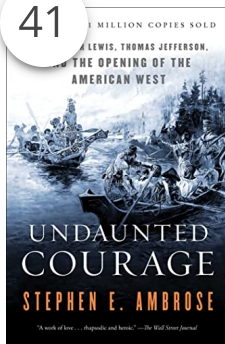
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

[Sign Up for Free Book Summaries](#)

41



Undaunted Courage

Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West

Stephen E. Ambros



4.15

'This was much more than a bunch of guys out on an exploring and collecting expedition. This was a military expedition into hostile territory'. In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson selected his personal secretary, Captain Meriwether Lewis, to lead a pioneering voyage across the Great Plains and into the Rockies. It was completely uncharted territory; a wild, vast land ruled by the Indians. Charismatic and brave, Lewis was the perfect choice and he experienced the savage North American continent

before any other white man. UNDAUNTED COURAGE is the tale of a hero, but it is also a tragedy. Lewis... [more](#)



Recommended by [Jamie Dimon](#), Danielle Morrill, and 2 others.

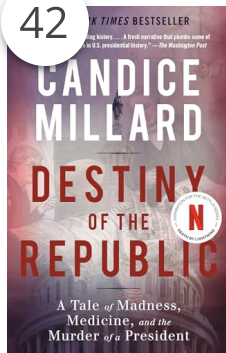


Danielle Morrill

@schlaf I loved this book, enjoy! ([Source](#))

[Buy on Amazon](#)

42



Destiny of the Republic

A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President

Candice Millard



4.13

James A. Garfield was one of the most extraordinary men ever elected president. Born into abject poverty, he rose to become a wunderkind scholar, a Civil War hero, and a renowned and admired reformist congressman. Nominated for president against his will, he engaged in a fierce battle with the corrupt political establishment. But four months after his inauguration, a deranged office seeker tracked Garfield down and shot him in the back.

But the shot didn't kill Garfield. The drama of what happened subsequently is a powerful story of a nation in turmoil. The unhinged assassin's... [more](#)



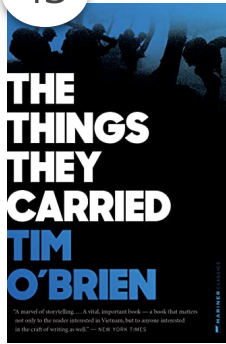
Recommended by [Ryan Holiday](#), and 1 others.



[Ryan Holiday](#)

These two unusual historical narratives about U.S presidents are shockingly good. I will read whatever else this woman writes. ([Source](#))

[Buy on Amazon](#)



The Things They Carried

Tim O'Brien



4.13

A classic, life-changing meditation on war, memory, imagination, and the redemptive power of storytelling, with more than two-million copies in print

Depicting the men of Alpha Company—Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and the character Tim O'Brien, who survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three—the stories in *The Things They Carried* opened our eyes to the nature of war in a way we will never forget. It is taught everywhere, from high school classrooms to graduate seminars in... [more](#)



Recommended by Karl Marlantes, Caroline

Paul, Eugene Gu, and 5 others.



Karl Marlantes

But when O'Brien wrote *The Things They Carried* he came down to absolute real brass tacks. It was no longer surreal, it was like here's a list of what a grunt carries, an infantry soldier... [\(Source\)](#)



Caroline Paul

A beautiful book by a writer who fought in Vietnam. [\(Source\)](#)

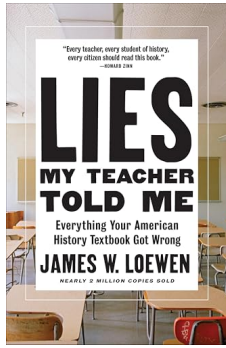


Eugene Gu

@realDonaldTrump Tim O'Brien is the author of the book *The Things They Carried*, which was about the Vietnam War. Must be very triggering for Trump since he dodged the draft multiple times with fraudulent doctors' notes for fake bone spurs like a coward. [\(Source\)](#)

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



Lies My Teacher Told Me

Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong

James W. Loewen

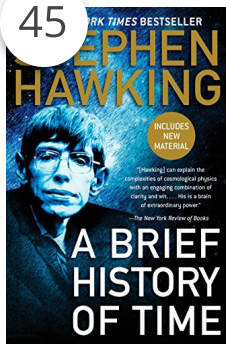


4.13

Americans have lost touch with their history, and in *Lies My Teacher Told Me* Professor James Loewen shows why. After surveying eighteen leading high school American history texts, he has concluded that not one does a decent job of making history interesting or memorable. Marred by an embarrassing combination of blind patriotism, mindless optimism, sheer misinformation, and outright lies, these books omit almost all the ambiguity, passion, conflict, and drama from our past.

In this revised edition, packed with updated material, Loewen explores how historical myths continue to... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



A Brief History of Time

Stephen Hawking



4.13

In the ten years since its publication in 1988, Stephen Hawking's classic work has become a landmark volume in scientific writing, with more than nine million copies in forty languages sold worldwide. That edition was on the cutting edge of what was then known about the origins and nature of the universe. But the intervening years have seen extraordinary advances in the technology of observing both the micro- and the macrocosmic worlds. These observations have confirmed many of Professor Hawking's theoretical predictions in the first edition of his book, including the recent discoveries of... [more](#)



Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), Dan

Hooper, Adam Hart-Davis, and 5 others.



[Richard Branson](#)

Today is World Book Day, a wonderful opportunity to address this #ChallengeRichard sent in by Mike Gonzalez of New Jersey: Make a list of your top 65 books to read in a lifetime. ([Source](#))



Dan Hooper

Everybody knows Hawking's greatest contributions: understanding that black holes radiate light and other particles, that they contain entropy and all these things that no one imagined before him. Hawking and Roger Penrose also worked out the Big Bang singularity, the very moment of creation. To hear him describe some of these things with his own word choices, his own phrasing—not to mention his... ([Source](#))

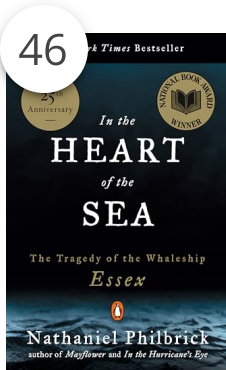


Adam Hart-Davis

When Stephen Hawking wrote A Brief History of Time..his publisher told him that every equation he left in would halve the number of readers ([Source](#))

[Read Full Book Summary](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



In the Heart of the Sea

The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex

Nathaniel Philbrick



4.12

"With its huge, scarred head halfway out of the water and its tail beating the ocean into a white-water wake more than forty feet across, the whale approached the ship at twice its original speed - at least six knots. With a tremendous cracking and splintering of oak, it struck the ship just beneath the anchor secured at the cat-head on the port bow..."

In the Heart of the Sea brings to new life the incredible story of the wreck of the whaleship Essex - an event as mythic in its own century as the

Titanic disaster in ours, and the inspiration for the climax of Moby-Dick.
In... [more](#)



Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), [Ryan Holiday](#),
and 2 others.



[Richard Branson](#)

Today is World Book Day, a wonderful opportunity to address this #ChallengeRichard sent in by Mike Gonzalez of New Jersey: Make a list of your top 65 books to read in a lifetime. ([Source](#))

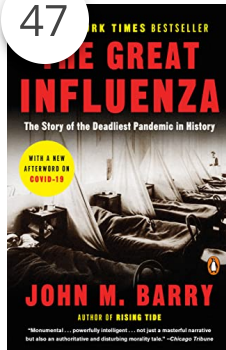


[Ryan Holiday](#)

Wow, did you know that Moby Dick was based on a true story? There was a real whaling ship that was broken in half by an angry sperm whale. But it gets even more insane. The members of the crew escaped in three lifeboats, traveling thousands of miles at sea with little food and water until they slowly resorted to cannibalism(!) Besides being an utterly unbelievable story, this book also gives a... ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

47



The Great Influenza

The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic
in History

John M. Barry



4.12

At the height of WWI, history's most lethal influenza virus erupted in an army camp in Kansas, moved east with American troops, then exploded, killing as many as 100 million people worldwide. It killed more people in twenty-four months than AIDS killed in twenty-four years, more in a year than the Black Death killed in a century. But this was not the Middle Ages, and 1918 marked the first collision of science and epidemic disease. Magisterial in its breadth of perspective and depth of research and now revised to reflect the growing danger of the avian flu, *The Great Influenza* is... [more](#)



Recommended by [Greg Dworkin](#), [Kyle Bass](#),
[Dave Collum](#), and 7 others.



[Greg Dworkin](#)



@heshsson yes1 brilliant book, which also explains flu better than most other things you will read ([Source](#))



Kyle Bass

@Holykisses Remember the Great Influenza of 1918 (amazing book by Barry)...40-50 million died at a 10% kill rate. The higher the rate, the faster it is likely to burn itself out. 10% is a global pandemic nightmare. ([Source](#))

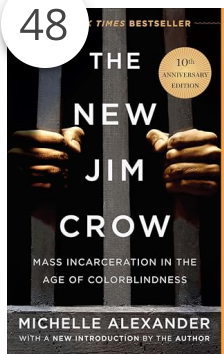


Dave Collum

I guess it is a good time to point out that "The Great Influenza" is a great book. If you think modern medicine would have mitigate this one, you haven't read the book. <https://t.co/t4uHPgfLE6> ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

48



The New Jim Crow

Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Michelle Alexander, Cornel West



4.11

"Jarvious Cotton's great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Klu Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation; his father was barred by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole."

As the United States celebrates the nation's "triumph over race" with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities are locked behind... [more](#)



Recommended by [Mark Zuckerberg](#), Peter Temin, and 2 others.



Mark Zuckerberg

I read *The New Jim Crow*, a study of how the U.S. justice system disproportionately criminalizes and jails blacks and Latinos. Making our criminal justice system fairer and more effective is a huge challenge for our country. I'm going to keep learning about this topic, but some things are already clear: We can't jail our way to a just society, and our current system isn't working (adapted with... [\(Source\)](#))

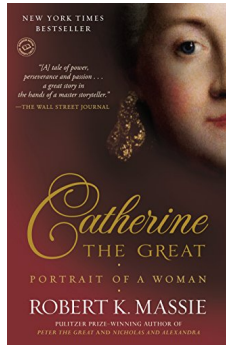


Peter Temin

The new *Jim Crow* that Michelle Alexander is talking about is mass incarceration. [\(Source\)](#)

 [Read Full Book Summary](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Catherine the Great Portrait of a Woman

Robert K. Massie



4.11

Pulitzer Prize winner Massie offers the tale of a princess who went to Russia at 14 and became one of the most powerful women in history. Born into minor German nobility, she transformed herself into an empress by sheer determination. Possessing a brilliant, curious mind, she devoured the works of Enlightenment philosophers, and reaching the throne, tried using their principles to rule the vast, backward empire. She knew or corresponded with notable figures of her time: Voltaire, Diderot, Frederick the Great, Maria Theresa of Austria, Marie Antoinette & John Paul Jones. Wanting to be the... [more](#)



Recommended by [Elon Musk](#), and 2 others.

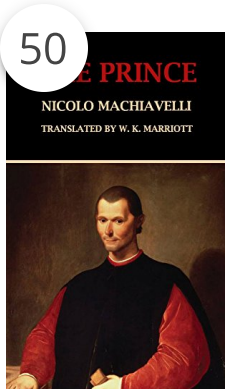


[Elon Musk](#)

I know what you're probably thinking ... did she really f* a horse?

[\(Source\)](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)



The Prince [with Biographical Introduction]

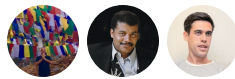
Niccollo Machiavelli, Tim Parks



4.11

Niccolo Machiavelli's "The Prince" is intended to be a treatise on ruling and is considered by many to be a classic of political science. In the book Machiavelli offers many bits of practical advice on how to rule and even though the book was written in the early 16th century its ideas are still very relevant today. Where "The Prince" differs from other political literature before it is in its separation of the lofty idealism of morality and

ethics from the practical demands of governing. It is this very aspect of Machiavelli's work that has made his name synonymous with an almost immoral... [more](#)



Recommended by Eric Ripert, [Neil deGrasse](#)

[Tyson](#), [Ryan Holiday](#), and 12 others.



Eric Ripert

A fascinating study and still wholly relevant. ([Source](#))



[Neil deGrasse Tyson](#)

Which books should be read by every single intelligent person on planet? [...] The Prince (Machiavelli) [to learn that people not in power will do all they can to acquire it, and people in power will do all they can to keep it]. If you read all of the above works you will glean profound insight into most of what has driven the history of the western world. ([Source](#))



[Ryan Holiday](#)

Of course, this is a must read. Machiavelli is one of those figures and writers who is tragically overrated and underrated at the same time. Unfortunately that means that many people who read him miss the point and other people avoid him and miss out altogether. Take Machiavelli slow, and really read him. Also understand the man behind the book—not just as a masterful writer but a man who... ([Source](#))

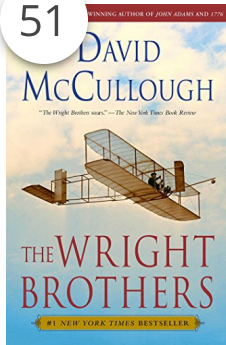
 [Buy on Amazon](#)

Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

51



The Wright Brothers

David McCullough



4.10

Two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize David McCullough tells the dramatic story-behind-the-story about the courageous brothers who taught the world how to fly: Wilbur and Orville Wright.

On a winter day in 1903, in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, two unknown brothers from Ohio changed history. But it would take the world some time to believe what had happened: the age of flight had begun, with the first heavier-than-air, powered machine carrying a pilot.

Who were these men and how was it that they achieved what they did?

David McCullough, two-time winner of... [more](#)



Recommended by [Brian Armstrong](#), Ed Zschau, and 2 others.

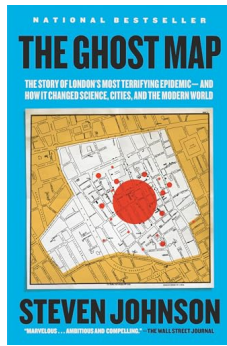


Ed Zschau

A fabulous book. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

52



The Ghost Map

The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World

Steven Johnson



4.10

From Steven Johnson, the dynamic thinker routinely compared to James Gleick, Dava Sobel, and Malcolm Gladwell, *The Ghost Map* is a riveting page-turner about a real-life historical hero, Dr. John Snow. It's the summer of 1854, and London is just emerging as one of the first modern cities in the world. But lacking the infrastructure—garbage removal, clean water, sewers—necessary to support its rapidly expanding population, the city has become the perfect breeding ground for a terrifying disease no one knows how to cure. As the cholera outbreak takes hold, a physician and a local curate... [more](#)



Recommended by Seth Mnookin, Alison

Alvarez, Stephen Evans, and 3 others.



Seth Mnookin

The Ghost Map is a book that I oftentimes give to people to show them how cool and exciting and accessible and gripping stories about scientific discoveries can be. ([Source](#))



Alison Alvarez

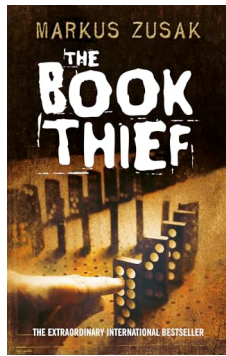
I read the Ghost Map, a book about 1854 London Cholera outbreak. The outbreak was stopped because of a map created by Dr. John Snow. You can see hints of this map in some of our customer discovery tools because it was such an effective way of pinpointing a solution to a seemingly insurmountable problem. ([Source](#))



Stephen Evans

Johnson looks at London during a specific moment in time, August 1854, and focuses on a particular incident, an outbreak of cholera in Soho, in Central London. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



The Book Thief

Markus Zusak



4.10

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will be busier still.

By her brother's graveside, Liesel's life is changed when she picks up a single object, partially hidden in the snow. It is The Gravedigger's Handbook, left behind there by accident, and it is her first act of book thievery. So begins a love affair with books and words, as Liesel, with the help of her accordion-playing foster father, learns to read. Soon she is stealing books from Nazi book-burnings, the mayor's wife's library, wherever there are books to be found. [more](#)



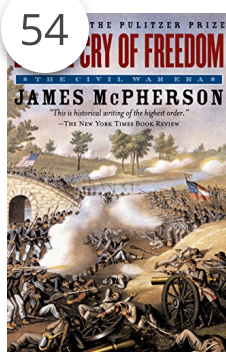
Recommended by Lydia Ruffles, and 1 others.



Lydia Ruffles
The [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

54



Battle Cry of Freedom

James M. McPherson



4.09

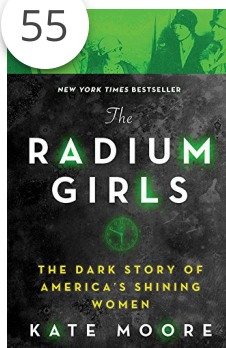
Filled with fresh interpretations and information, puncturing old myths and challenging new ones, *Battle Cry of Freedom* will unquestionably become the standard one-volume history of the Civil War.

James McPherson's fast-paced narrative fully integrates the political, social, and military events that crowded the two decades from the

outbreak of one war in Mexico to the ending of another at Appomattox. Packed with drama and analytical insight, the book vividly recounts the momentous episodes that preceded the Civil War--the Dred Scott decision, the Lincoln-Douglas debates,... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

55



The Radium Girls

The Dark Story of America's Shining Women

Kate Moore



4.09

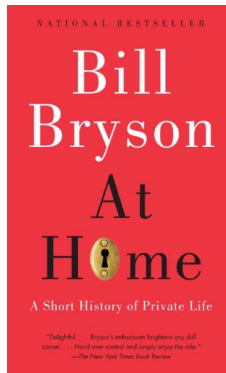
The incredible true story of the women who fought America's Undark danger

The Curies' newly discovered element of radium makes gleaming headlines across the nation as the fresh face of beauty, and wonder drug of the medical community. From body lotion to tonic water, the popular new element shines bright in the otherwise dark years of the First World War.

Meanwhile, hundreds of girls toil amidst the glowing dust of the radium-dial factories. The glittering chemical covers their bodies from head to toe; they light up the night like industrious fireflies.... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

56



At Home

A Short History of Private Life

Bill Bryson

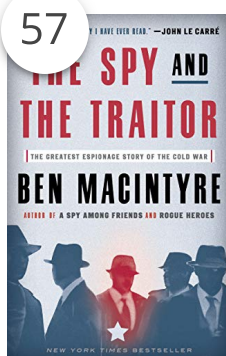


4.09

"Houses aren't refuges from history. They are where history ends up."

Bill Bryson and his family live in a Victorian parsonage in a part of England where nothing of any great significance has happened since the Romans decamped. Yet one day, he began to consider how very little he knew about the ordinary things of life as he found it in that comfortable home. To remedy this, he formed the idea of journeying about his house from room to room to "write a history of the world without leaving home." The bathroom provides the occasion for a history of hygiene; the bedroom, sex, death,... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



57

The Spy and the Traitor

The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War

Ben Macintyre



4.09

The celebrated author of *A Spy Among Friends* and *Rogue Heroes* returns with his greatest spy story yet, a thrilling Cold War-era tale of Oleg Gordievsky, the Russian whose secret work helped hasten the collapse of the Soviet Union.

If anyone could be considered a Russian counterpart to the infamous British double-agent Kim Philby, it was Oleg Gordievsky. The son of two KGB agents and the product of the best Soviet institutions, the savvy, sophisticated Gordievsky grew to see his nation's communism as both criminal and philistine. He took his first posting for... [more](#)



Recommended by [Casey Neistat](#), Isabel

Hardman, [Amrullah Saleh](#), and 5 others.



[Casey Neistat](#)

just finished this yesterday. absolutely fantastic book. super recommend if you're into spycraft and espionage. bravo @BenMacintyre1 <https://t.co/4OG4C1cBQ1> ([Source](#))



[Isabel Hardman](#)

@holland_tom @BenMacintyre1 Oh it's a brilliant book isn't it. Another one I was sad to finish. ([Source](#))

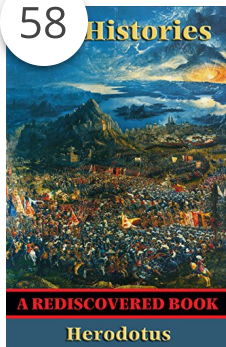


[Amrullah Saleh](#)

I had a great conversation with Ambassador Micheal Lund Jeppesen of @DKinAfghanistan . On the sidelines of our rich conversation we spoke of the Spy & the Traitor a great book in which Denmark's intelligence features highly. Proud of our alliance & cooperation. <https://t.co/47GMb7ETWr> ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

58



The Histories

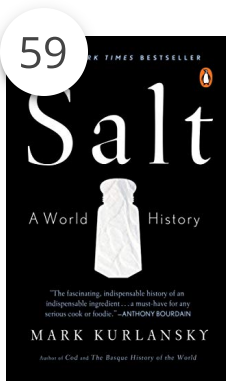
Herodotus, John M. Marincola, et al.



4.09

One of the masterpieces of classical literature, the "Histories" describes how a small and quarrelsome band of Greek city states united to repel the might of the Persian empire. But while this epic struggle forms the core of his work, Herodotus' natural curiosity frequently gives rise to colorful digressions - a description of the natural wonders of Egypt; an account of European lake-dwellers; and far-fetched accounts of dog-headed men and gold-digging ants. With its kaleidoscopic blend of fact and legend, the "Histories" offers a compelling Greek view of the world of the fifth century BC. [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Salt

A World History

Mark Kurlansky

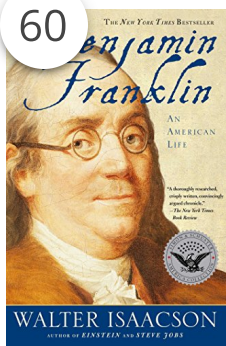


4.09

From the Bestselling Author of *Cod* and *The Basque History of the World*

In his fifth work of nonfiction, Mark Kurlansky turns his attention to a common household item with a long and intriguing history: salt. The only rock we eat, salt has shaped civilization from the very beginning, and its story is a glittering, often surprising part of the history of humankind. A substance so valuable it served as currency, salt has influenced the establishment of trade routes and cities, provoked and financed wars, secured empires, and inspired revolutions. Populated by colorful... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Benjamin Franklin

An American Life

Walter Isaacson



4.09

In this authoritative and engrossing full-scale biography, Walter Isaacson, bestselling author of *Einstein* and *Steve Jobs*, shows how the most fascinating of America's founders helped define our national character.

Benjamin Franklin is the founding father who winks at us, the one who seems made of flesh rather than marble. In a sweeping narrative that follows Franklin's life from Boston to Philadelphia to London and Paris and back, Walter Isaacson chronicles the adventures of the runaway

apprentice who became, over the course of his eighty-four-year life, America's... [more](#)



Recommended by [Elon Musk](#), [Timothy Ferriss](#), [Ryan Holiday](#), and 9 others.



[Elon Musk](#)

I didn't read actually very many general business books, but I like biographies and autobiographies, I think those are pretty helpful. Actually, a lot of them aren't really business. [...] Isaacson's biography on Franklin is really good. Cause he was an entrepreneur and he sort of started from nothing, actually he was just like a run away kid, basically, and created his printing business and sort... [\(Source\)](#)



[Scott Belsky](#)

[Scott Belsky recommended this book on the podcast "The Tim Ferriss Show".] [\(Source\)](#)



[Brandon Stanton](#)

The [biography of Benjamin Franklin] I read. [\(Source\)](#)

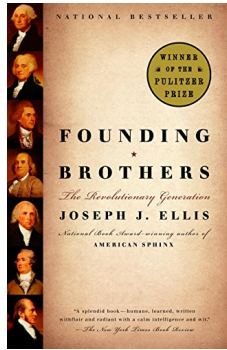
 [Buy on Amazon](#)

Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

[Sign Up for Free Book Summaries](#)



Founding Brothers

The Revolutionary Generation

Joseph J. Ellis



4.08

Informs our understanding of American politics--then and now--and gives us a new perspective on the unpredictable forces that shape history.

An illuminating study of the intertwined lives of the founders of the American republic--John Adams, Aaron Burr, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington.

During the 1790s, which Ellis calls the most decisive decade in our nation's history, the greatest statesmen of their generation--and perhaps any--came together to define the new republic and direct its course for the coming... [more](#)



Recommended by Andrea Wulf, and 1 others.

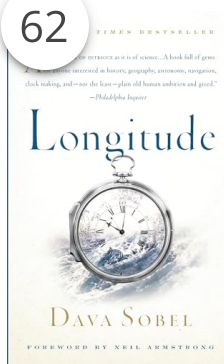


Andrea Wulf

Instead of writing a massive 700-page book, Ellis just gives you seven events which will tell you everything you need to know. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

62



Longitude

The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time

Dava Sobel, Neil Armstrong



4.08

Anyone alive in the eighteenth century would have known that "the longitude problem" was the thorniest scientific dilemma of the day—and had been for centuries. Lacking the ability to measure their longitude,

sailors throughout the great ages of exploration had been literally lost at sea as soon as they lost sight of land. Thousands of lives, and the increasing fortunes of nations, hung on a resolution.

The scientific establishment of Europe—from Galileo to Sir Issac Newton—had mapped the heavens in both hemispheres in its certain pursuit of a celestial answer. In stark contrast,... [more](#)



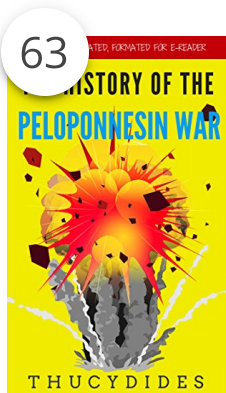
Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), and 1 others.



[Richard Branson](#)

Today is World Book Day, a wonderful opportunity to address this #ChallengeRichard sent in by Mike Gonzalez of New Jersey: Make a list of your top 65 books to read in a lifetime. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



History of the Peloponnesian War

R. Warner Thucydides, M. I. Finley



4.07

Written four hundred years before the birth of Christ, this detailed contemporary account of the long life-and-death struggle between Athens and Sparta stands an excellent chance of fulfilling its author's ambitious claim. Thucydides himself (c.460-400 BC) was an Athenian and achieved the rank of general in the earlier stages of the war. He applied thereafter a passion for accuracy and a contempt for myth and romance in compiling this factual record of a disastrous conflict. [more](#)



Recommended by [Satya Nadella](#), [Ryan](#)

[Holiday](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), and 3 others.



Ryan Holiday

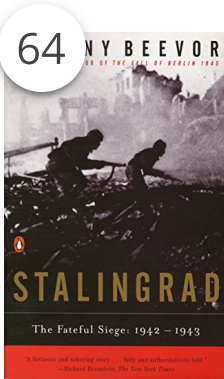
This book – of a long forgotten war – really functions as a biography and strategic analysis of some of the greatest minds in the history of war. We have Pericles, Brasidas, Alcibiades and many others. The anecdotes and the stories in this book are timeless. If you make your way all the way through it, I promise you will not forget it. Because the war was so long, involved so many different... [\(Source\)](#)



Steven Pressfield

It is loaded with hardcore, timeless truths and the story it tells ought to be required reading for every citizen in a democracy. [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Stalingrad

The Fateful Siege, 1942–1943

Antony Beevor



4.07

The Battle of Stalingrad was not only the psychological turning point of World War II: it also changed the face of modern warfare. Historians and reviewers worldwide have hailed Antony Beevor's magisterial *Stalingrad* as the definitive account of World War II's most harrowing battle.

In August 1942, Hitler's huge Sixth Army reached the city that bore Stalin's name. In the five-month siege that followed, the Russians fought to hold Stalingrad at any cost; then, in an astonishing reversal, encircled and trapped their Nazi enemy. This battle for the ruins of a city cost more...

[more](#)



Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), Peter Snow, and 2 others.



Richard Branson

Today is World Book Day, a wonderful opportunity to address this #ChallengeRichard sent in by Mike Gonzalez of New Jersey: Make a list of your top 65 books to read in a lifetime. [\(Source\)](#)



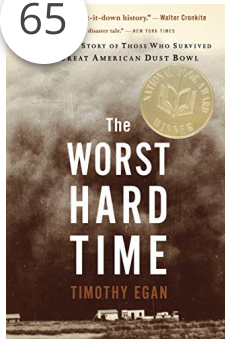
Peter Snow

Yes, it certainly was the turning point of the war. Whatever we British may claim for the titanic fight on the Normandy beaches on D-Day, the Battle of Stalingrad was the real decider and Beevor's account of

it is simply brilliant. He combines a sense of strategic grasp with the incredibly detailed story of ordinary men's experiences based on their own accounts. He did a huge amount of research... [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

65



The Worst Hard Time

The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl

Patrick Lawlor, Timothy Egan, et al

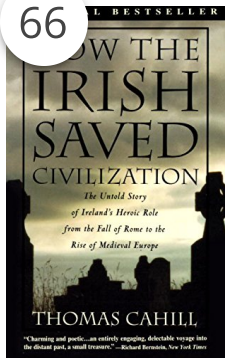


4.07

The dust storms that terrorized the High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since. Timothy Egan's critically acclaimed account rescues this iconic chapter of American history from the shadows in a tour de force of historical reportage. Following a dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, Egan tells of their desperate attempts to carry on through blinding black dust blizzards, crop failure, and the death of loved ones. Brilliantly capturing the terrifying drama of catastrophe, Egan does equal justice to the... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

66



How the Irish Saved Civilization

The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe

Thomas Cahill

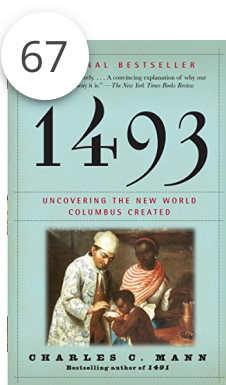


4.07

From the fall of Rome to the rise of Charlemagne - the "dark ages" - learning, scholarship, and culture disappeared from the European continent. The great heritage of western civilization - from the Greek and Roman classics to Jewish and Christian works - would have been utterly lost were it not for the holy men and women of unconquered Ireland.

In this delightful and illuminating look into a crucial but little-known "hinge" of history, Thomas Cahill takes us to the "island of saints and scholars," the Ireland of St. Patrick and the Book of Kells. Here, far from the barbarian... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



1493

Uncovering the New World Columbus Created

Charles C. Mann



4.07

A deeply engaging new history of how European settlements in the post-Colombian Americas shaped the world, from the bestselling author of *1491*. Presenting the latest research by biologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians, Mann shows how the post-Columbian network of ecological and economic exchange fostered the rise of Europe, devastated imperial China, convulsed Africa, and for two centuries made Mexico City—where Asia, Europe, and the new frontier of the Americas dynamically interacted—the center of the world. In this history, Mann uncovers the germ of today's... [more](#)



Recommended by Harsh Gupta, Tim

@Realscientists, Louise Fresco, and 3 others.



Harsh Gupta

Have you read the 1491 and 1493 book series? About the discovery of Americas and what it meant. Fascinating stuff. Have been reading 1493 by Charles Mann on Kindle. ([Source](#))



Tim @Realscientists

I highly recommend @CharlesCMann's fantastic book "1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created" for perspective on

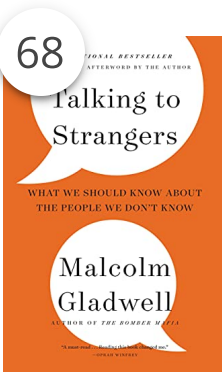
Andean potato history and its outsized influence on world history (see: Irish potato famine). <https://t.co/soMV0uzawP> (Source)



Louise Fresco

Charles Mann has many interesting stories about many foods, but the main message is the importance of trade and the fact that there have been massive movements of foods backwards and forwards. (Source)

 Buy on Amazon



Talking to Strangers

What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know

Malcolm Gladwell



4.07

Malcolm Gladwell, host of the podcast *Revisionist History* and author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *Outliers*, offers a powerful examination of our interactions with strangers -- and why they often go wrong.

How did Fidel Castro fool the CIA for a generation? Why did Neville Chamberlain think he could trust Adolf Hitler? Why are campus sexual assaults on the rise? Do television sitcoms teach us something about the way we relate to each other that isn't true?

While tackling these questions, Malcolm Gladwell was not solely writing a book for the page. He... [more](#)



Recommended by [Ryan Holiday](#), Nilofer Merchant, and 2 others.



[Ryan Holiday](#)

I'll put here what I emailed Malcolm when I finished the book: "Just finished your new book in one sitting yesterday. So good. You are at the height of your powers and remain an inspiration to all of us trying to master an un-masterable profession." It's a little less practical or self-improvement oriented than his previous books, but far more thought provoking. (Source)

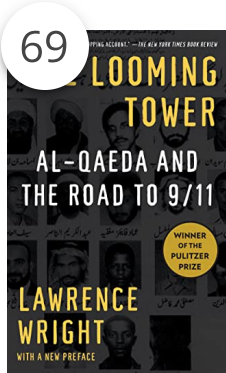


Nilofer Merchant

An interesting analysis/ essay re Gladwell's latest book —>
<https://t.co/5Ey1maNRyl> (Source)

 Read Full Book Summary

 Buy on Amazon



The Looming Tower

Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11

Lawrence Wright



4.06

A sweeping narrative history of the events leading to 9/11, a groundbreaking look at the people and ideas, the terrorist plans and the Western intelligence failures that culminated in the assault on America. Lawrence Wright's remarkable book is based on five years of research and hundreds of interviews that he conducted in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, England, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States.

The Looming Tower achieves an unprecedented level of intimacy and insight by telling the story through the interweaving lives of four men: the two... [more](#)



Recommended by [Bryan Callen](#), Mary Habeck, Peter Taylor, and 8 others.



[Bryan Callen](#)

I love [this author]. (Source)



Mary Habeck

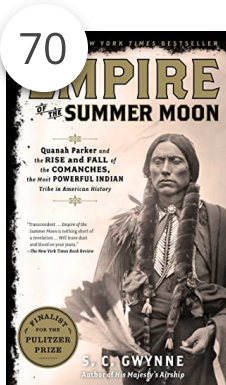
This is a fantastic account of the origins of al Qaeda, the individuals who laid the foundations of the organisation and why they carried out 9/11. (Source)



Peter Taylor

If anybody wishes to understand what Al-Qaeda is, where it came from and what it is trying to do, I think that this is the key book to read. (Source)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Empire of the Summer Moon

Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History

S. C. Gwynne



4.06

In the tradition of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, a stunningly vivid historical account of the forty-year battle between Comanche Indians and white settlers for control of the American West, centering on Quanah, the greatest Comanche chief of them all.

S. C. Gwynne's *Empire of the Summer Moon* spans two astonishing stories. The first traces the rise and fall of the Comanches, the most powerful Indian tribe in American history. The second entails one of the most remarkable narratives ever to come out of the Old West: the epic saga of the pioneer woman Cynthia Ann...

[more](#)



Recommended by [Lex Fridman](#), and 1 others.



[Lex Fridman](#)

[I admire] the purity of that way of life. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

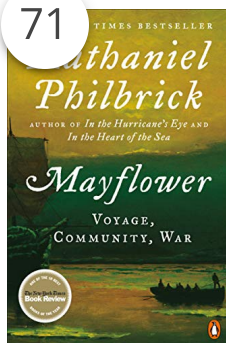
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

Sign Up for Free Book Summaries

71



Mayflower

A Story of Courage, Community, and War

Nathaniel Philbrick



4.06

HOW DID AMERICA BEGIN?

This simple question launches acclaimed author Nathaniel Philbrick on an extraordinary journey to understand the truth behind our most sacred national myth: the voyage of the *Mayflower* and the settlement of Plymouth Colony. As Philbrick reveals in this electrifying new book, the story of the Pilgrims does not end with the First Thanksgiving; instead, it is a fifty-five-year epic that is at once tragic and heroic, and still carries meaning for us today. [more](#)



Recommended by Catherine Manegold, and 1 others.



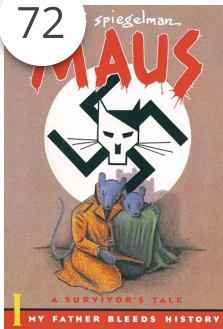
Catherine Manegold

This is a straight history but – and this is key – the emphasis is on the story. In this book Nathaniel Philbrick takes an event every American schoolchild knows about – the sailing of the *Mayflower* to North

America in 1620 – and turns the comfortable mythology about that moment on its head. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

72



Maus I: A Survivor's Tale

My Father Bleeds History (Maus, #1)

Art Spiegelman



4.06

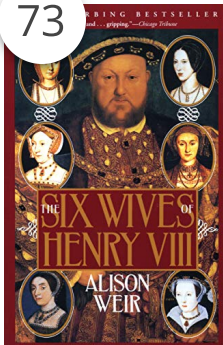
A story of a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe and his son, a cartoonist who tries to come to terms with his father's story and history itself. [more](#)



Recommended by [James Altucher](#), and 1 others.

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

73



The Six Wives of Henry VIII

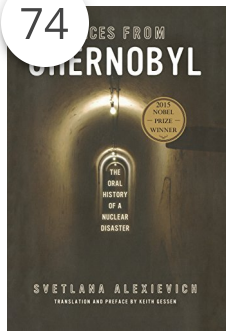
Alison Weir



4.06

Weir has tirelessly made her way through the entire labyrinth of Tudor history to tell the collective story of the six wives of Henry VIII--a vivid, full-blooded portrait of six very different women--in a work of sound and brilliant scholarship. Illustrations. [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Voices from Chernobyl

Svetlana Alexievich, Keith Gessen



4.05

On April 26, 1986, the worst nuclear reactor accident in history occurred at the Chernobyl complex in Pripyat. English-language reportage on the incident has, so far, focused on facts, names, and data; *Voices from Chernobyl* presents first-hand accounts of what happened to the people of Belarus and the fear, anger, and uncertainty that they lived through. In order to give voice to their experiences, Svetlana Alexievich interviewed hundreds of people (firefighters, disaster-cleanup technicians, and innocent citizens alike) affected by the meltdown. She presents these interviews in monologue... [more](#)



Recommended by Caterina Fake, [Craig Mazin](#),

Kate Brown, and 4 others.

[Craig Mazin](#)

These are sources I found fascinating and useful. Not ALL of them, but a bunch. First up, obviously... Svetlana Alexievich's *Voices From Chernobyl*. Absolutely essential, and heartbreaking, reading. There's a reason Ms. Alexievich has a Nobel Prize. ([Source](#))



Kate Brown

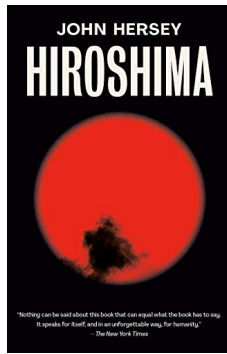
It's a very beautiful work and I think it gives you the emotional landscape of how people dealt with their anxieties, fears, the health problems that ensued, and their growing sense of disillusionment with their political leaders and the Communist party. ([Source](#))



Rebecca Altman

What follows events like Chernobyl is a politics of measurement. Who counts? What counts? Who does the counting? How are boundaries drawn for the purposes of counting and comparing? And what is discounted, or never counted at all? ([Source](#))

[Buy on Amazon](#)



Hiroshima

John Hersey



4.05

On August 6, 1945, Hiroshima was destroyed by the first atom bomb ever dropped on a city. This book, John Hersey's journalistic masterpiece, tells what happened on that day. Told through the memories of survivors, this timeless, powerful and compassionate document has become a classic "that stirs the conscience of humanity" (*The New York Times*).

Almost four decades after the original publication of this celebrated book, John Hersey went back to Hiroshima in search of the people whose stories he had told. His account of what he discovered about them is now the eloquent and... [more](#)



Recommended by Alex Blumberg, and 1 others.

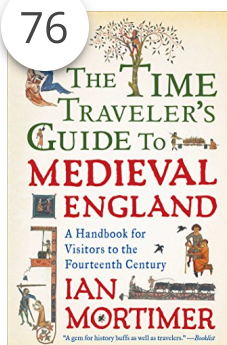


Alex Blumberg

I had always been interested in this kind of [...] long form narrative nonfiction. ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon

76



The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England

A Handbook for Visitors to the Fourteenth Century

Ian Mortimer



4.05

Imagine you could get into a time machine and travel back to the 14th century. This text sets out to explain what life was like in the most immediate way, through taking the reader to the Middle Ages, and showing everything from the horrors of leprosy and war to the ridiculous excesses of roasted larks and haute couture. [more](#)

 Buy on Amazon

77



One Summer

America, 1927

Bill Bryson



4.05

In *One Summer* Bill Bryson, one of our greatest and most beloved nonfiction writers, transports readers on a journey back to one amazing season in American life.

The summer of 1927 began with one of the signature events of the twentieth century: on May 21, 1927, Charles Lindbergh became the first man to cross the Atlantic by plane nonstop, and when he landed in Le Bourget airfield near Paris, he ignited an explosion of worldwide rapture and instantly became the most famous person on the planet. Meanwhile, the titanicly talented Babe Ruth was beginning his assault on the... [more](#)



Recommended by Tom Terry, and 1 others.

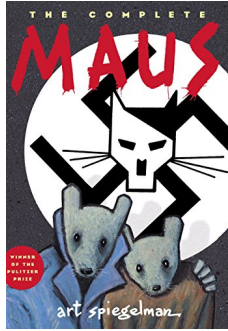


Tom Terry

Wow, I didn't know this! What an unbelievable accomplishment this was. Something so common nowadays was a huge endeavor in the 1927. BTW, a GREAT BOOK about this and other stories read: One Summer (in 1927) by Bill Bryson. Fantastic. <https://t.co/EKvghJ1u5y> ([Source](#))

 Buy on Amazon

78



The Complete Maus

Art SPIEGELMAN



4.04

Combined for the first time here are Maus I: A Survivor's Tale and Maus II - the complete story of Vladek Spiegelman and his wife, living and surviving in Hitler's Europe. By addressing the horror of the Holocaust through cartoons, the author captures the everyday reality of fear and is able to explore the guilt, relief and extraordinary sensation of survival - and how the children of survivors are in their own way affected by the trials of their parents. A contemporary classic of immeasurable significance. [more](#)



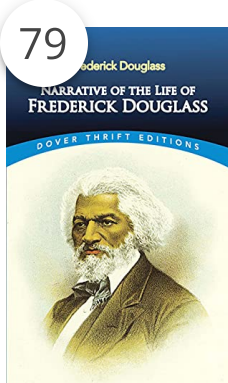
Recommended by Susan Bordo, and 1 others.



Susan Bordo

It's about the Holocaust. It's also a comic book, in which the various characters are depicted as animals - the Jews as mice, the Nazis as cats. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass



4.04

An alternate cover edition of this ISBN can be found [here](#).

Former slave, impassioned abolitionist, brilliant writer, newspaper editor and eloquent orator whose speeches fired the abolitionist cause, Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) led an astounding life. Physical abuse, deprivation and tragedy plagued his early years, yet through sheer force of character he was able to overcome these obstacles to become a

leading spokesman for his people.

In this, the first and... [more](#)



Recommended by Bianca Belair, and 1 others.

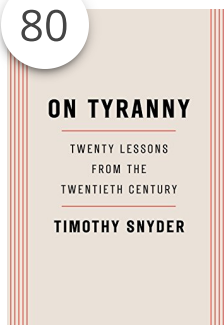


Bianca Belair

For #BlackHistoryMonth I will be sharing some of my favorite books by Black Authors 6th Book: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass By: Frederick Douglass The 1st of many autobiographies that he wrote, and another classic you will find on almost every must-read A.A list. <https://t.co/v5PgGpoqxQ> ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon

80



On Tyranny

Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century

Timothy Snyder



4.04

A historian of fascism offers a guide for surviving and resisting America's turn towards authoritarianism.

On November 9th, millions of Americans woke up to the impossible: the election of Donald Trump as president. Against all predictions, one of the most-disliked presidential candidates in history had swept the electoral college, elevating a man with open contempt for democratic norms and institutions to the height of power.

Timothy Snyder is one of the most celebrated historians of the Holocaust. In his books *Bloodlands* and *Black Earth*, he has carefully... [more](#)



Recommended by George Saunders, [Tom](#)

[Holland](#), Maya Wiley, and 3 others.



George Saunders

Please read this book. So smart, so timely. ([Source](#))



Tom Holland

"There isn't a page of this magnificent book that does not contain some fascinating detail and the narrative is held together with a novelist's eye for character and theme." #Dominion
<https://t.co/FESSNxVDLC> (Source)



Maya Wiley

Prof. Tim Snyder, author of "In Tyranny" reminded us in that important little book that we must protect our institutions. #DOJ is one of our most important in gov't for the rule of law. This is our collective house & #Barr should be evicted.
<https://t.co/PPxM9IMQUm> (Source)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

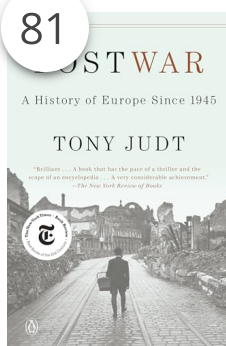
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

[Sign Up for Free Book Summaries](#)

81



Postwar

A History of Europe Since 1945

Tony Judt



4.04

Almost a decade in the making, this much-anticipated grand history of postwar Europe from one of the world's most esteemed historians and intellectuals is a singular achievement. *Postwar* is the first modern history that covers all of Europe, both east and west, drawing on research in six languages to sweep readers through thirty-four nations and sixty years of political and cultural change—all in one integrated, enthralling narrative. Both intellectually ambitious and compelling to read, thrilling in its scope and delightful in its small details, *Postwar* is a rare joy.

[more](#)



Recommended by David Marquand, Keith Lowe, and 2 others.



David Marquand

This book is all about the way that Europe has managed – not always totally successfully, but managed nevertheless – to come to terms with its bloody and horrible past. ([Source](#))

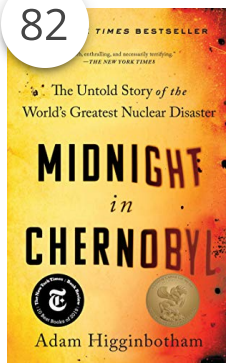


Keith Lowe

What ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

82



Midnight in Chernobyl

The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster

Adam Higginbotham



4.04

The definitive, dramatic untold story of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, based on original reporting and new archival research.

April 25, 1986, in Chernobyl, was a turning point in world history. The disaster not only changed the world's perception of nuclear power and the science that spawned it, but also our understanding of the planet's delicate ecology. With the images of the abandoned homes and playgrounds beyond the barbed wire of the 30-kilometer Exclusion Zone, the rusting graveyards of contaminated trucks and helicopters, the farmland lashed with black... [more](#)



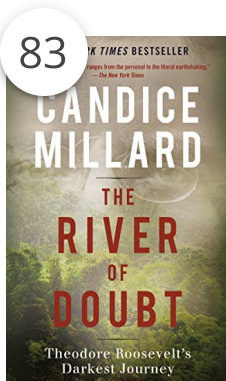
Recommended by Maggie Koerthbaker, and 1 others.



Maggie Koerthbaker

So I'm reading "Midnight in Chernobyl" because obviously TV viewing needs to come with a syllabus afterwards. <https://t.co/bWCLHTy7fq> It is very interesting contrasting the fictionalized show, the history book, and the essays meant to debunk aspects of the show. ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon



The River of Doubt

Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey

Candice Millard



4.04

At once an incredible adventure narrative and a penetrating biographical portrait, *The River of Doubt* is the true story of Theodore Roosevelt's harrowing exploration of one of the most dangerous rivers on earth.

The River of Doubt—it is a black, uncharted tributary of the Amazon that snakes through one of the most treacherous jungles in the world. Indians armed with poison-tipped arrows haunt its shadows; piranhas glide through its waters; boulder-strewn rapids turn the river into a roiling cauldron.

After his humiliating election defeat in 1912, Roosevelt set his... [more](#)



Recommended by [Ryan Holiday](#), and 1 others.

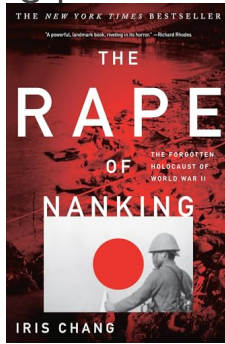


Ryan Holiday

These two unusual historical narratives about U.S presidents are shockingly good. I will read whatever else this woman writes. ([Source](#))

Buy on Amazon

84



The Rape of Nanking

Iris Chang



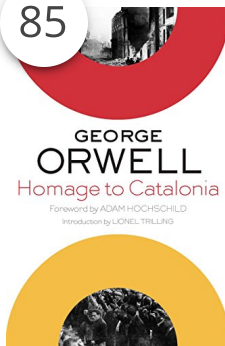
4.04

In December 1937, the Japanese army invaded the ancient city of Nanking, systematically raping, torturing, and murdering more than 300,000 Chinese civilians.

This book tells the story from three perspectives: of the Japanese soldiers who performed it, of the Chinese civilians who endured it, and of a group of Europeans and Americans who refused to abandon the city and were able to create a safety zone that saved many. [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

85



Homage to Catalonia

George Orwell



4.03

In 1936 George Orwell travelled to Spain to report on the Civil War and instead joined the fight against the Fascists. This famous account describes the war and Orwell's own experiences. Introduction by Lionel Trilling. [more](#)



Recommended by [Timothy Snyder](#), [Ben](#)

[Shapiro](#), [Timothy Garton Ash](#), and 4 others.



[Timothy Snyder](#)

The reason why I am so fond of *Homage to Catalonia*, and see it as an even more relevant precursor to dissent, is that in it you can see a man of the Left learning to make the distinction that breaks down the Left with a big L into lots of little lefts. He comes to understand what

Soviet power actually is, and that it is qualitatively different to the other sorts of Spanish left, or to European... [\(Source\)](#)



Ben Shapiro

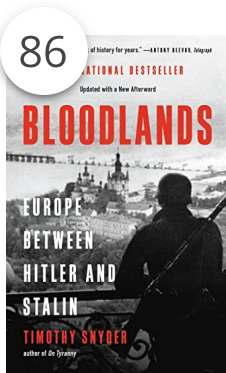
A lot of people have read Orwell's 1984, he actually wrote a book that's better. It's [this book]. [\(Source\)](#)



Timothy Garton Ash

Anyone who wants to go off and write about Egypt, Tunisia or Libya today should pack a copy of *Homage to Catalonia*. It's brilliant reportage. As you know, it opens with a vignette of an Italian militiaman in the barracks in Barcelona and he only saw this guy for a few moments but it captures the excitement. [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



Bloodlands

Europe Between Hitler and Stalin

Timothy Snyder



4.03

Americans call the Second World War “The Good War.” But before it even began, America’s wartime ally Josef Stalin had killed millions of his own citizens—and kept killing them during and after the war. Before Hitler was finally defeated, he had murdered six million Jews and nearly as many other Europeans. At war’s end, both the German and the Soviet killing sites fell behind the iron curtain, leaving the history of mass killing in darkness.

Bloodlands is a new kind of European history, presenting the mass murders committed by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes as two aspects of a single... [more](#)



Recommended by [Eric Weinstein](#), [Antony](#)

[Beevor](#), [Edward Lucas](#), and 4 others.



Eric Weinstein

[Eric Weinstein recommended this book on Twitter.] [\(Source\)](#)



Antony Beevor

This book is about...the Stalinist repression of the areas known as the borderlands, which Snyder has termed the bloodlands. Snyder is looking at the deliberate mass murder of civilians in a particular zone

of Europe between about 1930, at the start of the second Ukraine famine, and 1945. [\(Source\)](#)

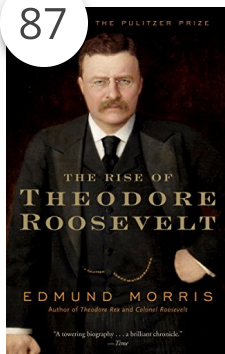


Edward Lucas

Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin offers the best account of the most important and terrible years of the last century, when Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler jointly consigned the territories and people between their two empires to the meat-grinder. [\(Source\)](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

87



The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt

Edmund Morris



4.03

Selected by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best nonfiction books of all time

Described by the *Chicago Tribune* as "a classic," **The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt** stands as one of the greatest biographies of our time. The publication of **The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt** on September 14th, 2001 marks the 100th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt becoming president. [more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), [Ryan](#)

[Holiday](#), [Simon Johnson](#), and 3 others.



[Barack Obama](#)

The Oval office can be a lonely place, so reading about your forefather's experience could only help. "The biographies have been useful, because I do think that there's a tendency, understandable, to think that whatever's going on right now is uniquely disastrous or amazing or difficult," said President Obama in an interview. [\(Source\)](#)



[Ryan Holiday](#)

When I was younger I would ask any smart or successful person I met to recommend a book for me to read. Dr. Drew recommended that I read *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*. It immediately became a lifetime favorite that I have reread several times (Amazon tells me I bought it Oct 26, 2006). It ends the day he is telegraphed that

McKinley has been assassinated—so the book focuses on everything before... [\(Source\)](#)

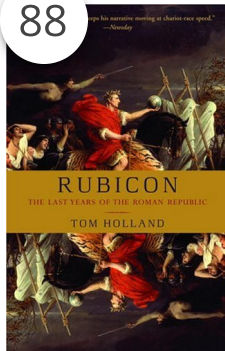


Simon Johnson

This book is about admiration for a man who rises through a series of remarkable coincidences. The key thing is that he channelled the times. [\(Source\)](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

88



Rubicon

The Last Years of the Roman Republic

Tom Holland

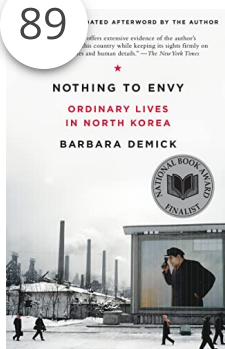


4.03

In 49 B.C., the seven hundred fifth year since the founding of Rome, Julius Caesar crossed a small border river called the Rubicon and plunged Rome into cataclysmic civil war. Tom Holland's enthralling account tells the story of Caesar's generation, witness to the twilight of the Republic and its bloody transformation into an empire. From Cicero, Spartacus, and Brutus, to Cleopatra, Virgil, and Augustus, here are some of the most legendary figures in history brought thrillingly to life. Combining verve and freshness with scrupulous scholarship, *Rubicon* is not only an engrossing history... [more](#)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

89



Nothing to Envy

Ordinary Lives in North Korea

Barbara Demick, Karen White, et al



4.02

Nothing to Envy follows the lives of six North Koreans over fifteen years—a chaotic period that saw the death of Kim Il-sung, the unchallenged rise to power of his son Kim Jong-il, and the devastation of a far-ranging famine that killed one-fifth of the population.

Taking us into a landscape most of us have never before seen, award-winning journalist Barbara Demick brings to life what it means to be living under the most repressive totalitarian regime today—an Orwellian world that is by choice not connected to the Internet, in which radio and television dials are welded to... [more](#)



Recommended by Hyeonseo Lee, and 1 others.

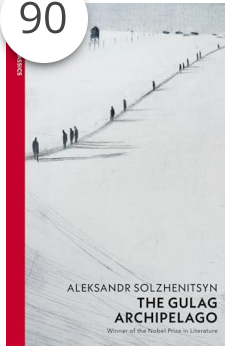


Hyeonseo Lee

She includes great details that show everyday life in North Korea. [\(Source\)](#)

[Buy on Amazon](#)

90



The Gulag Archipelago (Abridged edition)

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn



4.02

The Gulag Archipelago is Solzhenitsyn's masterwork, a vast canvas of camps, prisons, transit centres and secret police, of informers and spies and interrogators and also of heroism, a Stalinist anti-world at the heart of the Soviet Union where the key to survival lay not in hope but in despair.

The work is based on the testimony of some two hundred survivors, and on the recollection of Solzhenitsyn's own eleven years in labour camps and exile. It is both a thoroughly researched document and a feat of literary and imaginative power. This edition has been abridged into one... [more](#)



Recommended by [Jordan B Peterson](#), and 1 others.



[Jordan B Peterson](#)

"The Gulag Archipelago" audiobook is available now in the UK (<https://t.co/FwqDKSEp2w>) with a forward narrated by me as well as a Q&A with myself and Ignat Solzhenitsyn at the end of the book that I believe you'll enjoy! Who here has previously read the book? <https://t.co/SHldoeI0sY> (Source)

 Buy on Amazon

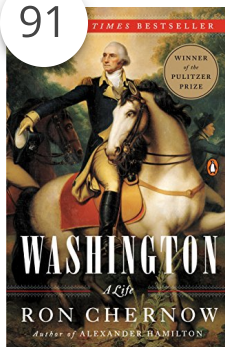
Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

Sign Up for Free Book Summaries

91



Washington

A Life

Ron Chernow



4.02

The celebrated Ron Chernow provides a richly nuanced portrait of the father of America. With a breadth and depth matched by no other one-volume life, he carries the reader through Washington's troubled boyhood, his precocious feats in the French and Indian Wars, his creation of Mount Vernon, his heroic exploits with the Continental Army, his presiding over the Constitutional Convention and his magnificent

performance as America's first president.

Despite the reverence his name inspires Washington remains a waxwork to many readers, worthy but dull, a laconic man of remarkable... [more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), [Ryan Holiday](#), and 2 others.



[Barack Obama](#)

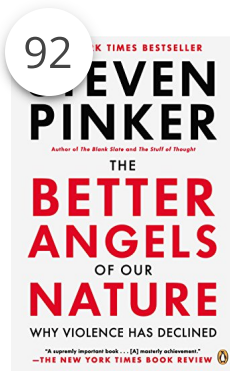
The president also released a list of his summer favorites back in 2015: All That Is, James Salter The Sixth Extinction, Elizabeth Kolbert The Lowland, Jhumpa Lahiri Between the World and Me, Ta-Nehisi Coates Washington: A Life, Ron Chernow All the Light We Cannot See, Anthony Doerr ([Source](#))



[Ryan Holiday](#)

In terms of big biographies, Ron Chernow's biography of Washington, Eric Romm's biography of Seneca Dying Every Day (LOVED THIS) and Edmund Morris' final biography of Theodore Roosevelt, Col. Roosevelt were all worth every page. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)



The Better Angels of Our Nature

Why Violence Has Declined

Steven Pinker



4.02

Believe it or not, today we may be living in the most peaceful moment in our species' existence. In his gripping and controversial new work, *New York Times* bestselling author Steven Pinker shows that despite the ceaseless news about war, crime, and terrorism, violence has actually been in decline over long stretches of history. Exploding myths about humankind's inherent violence and the curse of modernity, this ambitious book continues Pinker's exploration of the essence of human nature, mixing psychology and history to provide a remarkable picture of an increasingly enlightened world. [more](#)



Recommended by [Bill Gates](#), [Mark Zuckerberg](#), [Eric Schmidt](#), and 15 others.



Bill Gates

Yong succeeds in his intention to give us a 'grander view of life' and does so without falling prey to grand, unifying explanations that are far too simplistic. He presents our inner ecosystems in all their wondrous messiness and complexity. And he offers realistic optimism that our growing knowledge of the human microbiome will lead to great new opportunities for enhancing our health. ([Source](#))



Mark Zuckerberg

My second book of the year is *The Better Angels of Our Nature* by Steven Pinker. It's a timely book about how and why violence has steadily decreased throughout our history, and how we can continue this trend. Recent events might make it seem like violence and terrorism are more common than ever, so it's worth understanding that all violence -- even terrorism -- is actually decreasing over time.... ([Source](#))

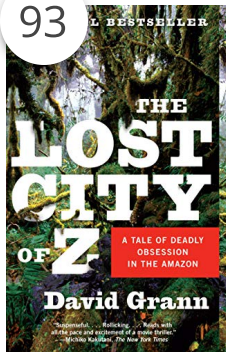


Eric Schmidt

When you finish [this book], which takes a long time, you conclude that the world is in a much, much better place than it has been in the past. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

93



The Lost City of Z

A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon

DAVID GRANN



4.01

A grand mystery reaching back centuries. A sensational disappearance that made headlines around the world. A quest for truth that leads to death, madness or disappearance for those who seek to solve it. *The Lost City of Z* is a blockbuster adventure narrative about what lies beneath the impenetrable jungle canopy of the Amazon.

After stumbling upon a hidden trove of diaries, New Yorker writer David Grann set out to solve "the greatest exploration mystery of the 20th century": What happened to the British explorer Percy Fawcett & his quest for the Lost City of Z?

[more](#)



Recommended by The Jupiter Girl, and 1 others.

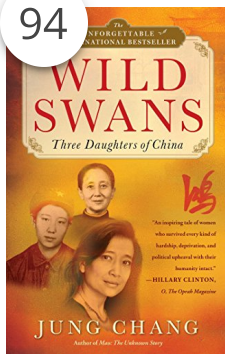


The Jupiter Girl

The Lost City of Z (I have the book and it remains unread in Australia) is an odd little film, it's really more about the father-son relationship rather than what motivates Fawcett. It's a slow and dreamy film about a dreamer searching for some great achievement in his life
([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

94



Wild Swans

Three Daughters of China

Jung Chang



4.01

Three remarkable women--grandmother, mother, and daughter--struggle to survive in a true-life saga that spans 20th-century China with all its violence: wars, invasions, revolution, and continuing upheaval. A thrilling adventure story, Wild Swans is an important work of history, and a breathtaking testimony to the human spirit. 16 pages of photographs.

[more](#)



Recommended by [Richard Branson](#), Vishakha

Desai, Harry Wu, and 3 others.



[Richard Branson](#)

Today is World Book Day, a wonderful opportunity to address this #ChallengeRichard sent in by Mike Gonzalez of New Jersey: Make a list of your top 65 books to read in a lifetime. ([Source](#))



Vishakha Desai

To me Wild Swans is one of those iconic books for understanding the generations of Chinese women. She is from this amazing intellectual family and it's about what happens to them. The book just has this tremendous power. It's an amazing journey. It's about what women do to survive and also how they suffer. ([Source](#))



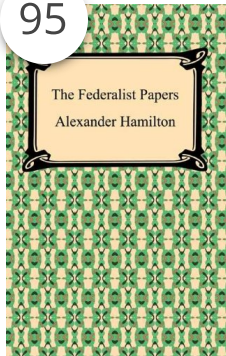
Harry Wu

Wild Swans is talking about people who are living at the highest level of society but they are still suffering persecution and live in fear. And the peasants in the village became slaves, they became nothing. So

what the book does brilliantly is give a real insight into what life was like for ordinary people against the backdrop of the ever-changing China. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

95



The Federalist Papers

Alexander Hamilton



4.01

Hailed by Thomas Jefferson as “the best commentary on the principles of government which was ever written”, The Federalist Papers is a collection of eighty-five essays published by Founding Fathers Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay from 1787 to 1788, as a means to persuade the public to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

With nearly two-thirds of the essays written by Hamilton, this enduring classic is perfect for modern audiences passionate about his work or seeking a deeper understanding of one of the most important documents in US history.

[more](#)



Recommended by [Barack Obama](#), [Karl Rove](#), and 2 others.



[Barack Obama](#)

According to the president’s Facebook page and a 2008 interview with the New York Times, these titles are among his most influential forever favorites: Moby Dick, Herman Melville Self-Reliance, Ralph Waldo Emerson Song Of Solomon, Toni Morrison Parting The Waters, Taylor Branch Gilead, Marilynne Robinson Best and the Brightest, David Halberstam The Federalist, Alexander Hamilton Souls of Black... ([Source](#))



[Karl Rove](#)

I think this is the greatest explanation, in one place, of the American constitution, of the essential underpinnings and structures that make American democracy possible. This is how to view the constitution in its proper perspective, as a document of limited government, and enormous personal freedom – as an attempt to understand human

nature and draw on both its strengths and its weaknesses to...
(Source)

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

96

Killing Lincoln

The Shocking Assassination that Changed America Forever (The Killing of Historical Figures)

Bill O'Reilly, Martin Dugard



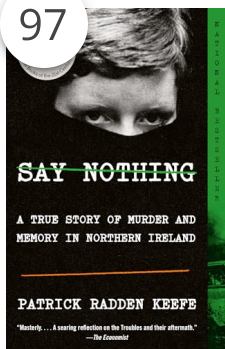
4.01

A riveting historical narrative of the heart-stopping events surrounding the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the first work of history from mega-bestselling author Bill O'Reilly

The anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor* recounts one of the most dramatic stories in American history—how one gunshot changed the country forever. In the spring of 1865, the bloody saga of America's Civil War finally comes to an end after a series of increasingly harrowing battles. President Abraham Lincoln's generous terms for Robert E. Lee's surrender are devised to fulfill Lincoln's dream...

[more](#)

97



Say Nothing

A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland

Patrick Radden Keefe



4.00

14 hours, 40 minutes

From award-winning *New Yorker* staff writer Patrick Radden Keefe, a stunning, intricate narrative about a notorious killing in Northern Ireland and its devastating repercussions

In December 1972, Jean McConville, a thirty-eight-year-old mother of ten, was dragged from her Belfast home by masked intruders, her children clinging to her legs. They never saw her again. Her abduction was one of the most notorious episodes of the vicious conflict known as The Troubles. Everyone in the neighborhood knew the I.R.A. was... [more](#)



Recommended by Carrie Johnson, Margot Wallström, Mikko Takkunen, and 6 others.



Carrie Johnson

The best book I read last year.  <https://t.co/CULq9zZHEU> ([Source](#))



Margot Wallström

I recommend the book "Say nothing" about Northern Ireland and IRA. It makes fascinating reading about memories, murder, mourning and making peace. ([Source](#))



Mikko Takkunen

Just finished reading this remarkable book by @praddenkeefe. I was baffled getting this from @VeronicaSanchis as I don't remember ever showing particular interest in the Troubles, but she obviously knows me better than I do. <https://t.co/KIBCF41y47> <https://t.co/PnjILCZyQD> ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

98

The Plantagenets

The Warrior Kings and Queens Who Made England

Dan Jones



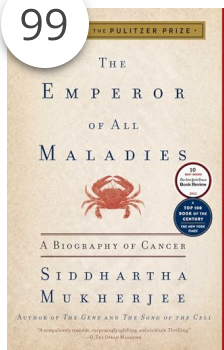
4.00

The first Plantagenet king inherited a blood-soaked kingdom from the Normans and transformed it into an empire stretched at its peak from Scotland to Jerusalem. In this epic history, Dan Jones vividly resurrects this fierce and seductive royal dynasty and its mythic world.

We meet the captivating Eleanor of Aquitaine, twice queen and the most famous woman in Christendom; her son, Richard the Lionheart, who fought Saladin in the Third Crusade; and King John, a tyrant who was forced to sign Magna Carta, which formed the basis of our own Bill of Rights.

This is the era of... [more](#)

99



The Emperor of All Maladies

A Biography of Cancer

Siddhartha Mukherjee, Fred Sanders, et al



4.00

Alternate Cover Edition ISBN 1439107955 (ISBN13: 9781439107959)

The Emperor of All Maladies is a magnificent, profoundly humane “biography” of cancer—from its first documented appearances thousands of years ago through the epic battles in the twentieth century to cure, control, and conquer it to a radical new understanding of its essence.

Physician, researcher, and award-winning science writer, Siddhartha Mukherjee examines cancer with a cellular biologist’s precision, a historian’s perspective, and a biographer’s passion. The result is an astonishingly lucid and... [more](#)



Recommended by [Bill Gates](#), Timothy J. Jorgensen, and 2 others.



[Bill Gates](#)

I loved [this] brilliant book about cancer. ([Source](#))

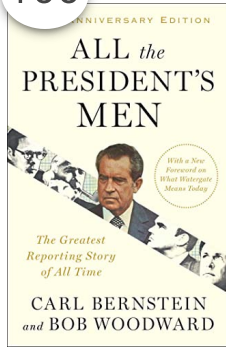


Timothy J. Jorgensen

A tremendous amount of cancer biology comes through in that book through the eyes of the victims and the people up close and personal. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

100



All the President's Men

Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein



4.00

This landmark book details all the events of the biggest political scandal in the history of this nation--Watergate. Woodward and Bernstein kept the headlines coming, delivering revelation after amazing revelation to a shocked public. Black-and-white photograph section. [more](#)



Recommended by Nick Davies, and 1 others.



Nick Davies

What is so good about All the President's Men is that most books about journalists are full of gun fights and car chases – but that's just not what the job involves. Woodward and Bernstein simply wrote a great, really detailed account of the work that went into the case. I still use sections from it as case studies when I give lectures. ([Source](#))

 [Buy on Amazon](#)

Don't have time to read the top History books of all time? Read Shortform summaries.

Shortform summaries help you learn 10x faster by:

- Being comprehensive: you learn the **most important points in the book**
- Cutting out the fluff: you focus your time on what's important to know
- Interactive exercises: **apply the book's ideas to your own life** with our educators' guidance.

Sign Up for Free Book Summaries

© 2025 Shortform

1449 S. Michigan Ave Ste 13130

Chicago, IL 60605

help@shortform.com



[Home](#) [Our Summaries](#) [Pricing](#) [About](#) [Blog](#) [Terms](#)
[Privacy](#) [Sign Up](#)